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Hezbollah, a Historical Materialist Analysis

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

2015

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Abstract

This research aims at giving a comprehensive overview and understanding of the Lebanese party Hezbollah. Previous research on Hezbollah has typically focused on one or two aspects of the party's identity, usually the military question, or has concentrated solely on the organisation's religious discourse. This thesis presents an alternative perspective, using a historical materialist analysis to situate an understanding of Hezbollah in socio-economic and political developments in Lebanon and the wider region.

To this end, the thesis begins by explaining the establishment of Hezbollah, proceeding then to the party's development vis-à-vis the political situation in Lebanon and in the region. Particular focus is placed on Hezbollah's historic ties with its main sponsor, the Islamic Republic of Iran – ties that have remained strong from the founding of the party until today.

Situated in this narrative, the thesis analyses how neoliberal policies in Lebanon following the Lebanese Civil War – and the associated socio-economic evolution of the Shi'a population – influenced Hezbollah's popular constituency and outlook. The ability of Hezbollah to build a hegemonic position within Lebanese Shi'a areas through its media and cultural wings, and use of arms, is examined. Later chapters critically analyse the party's policies towards workers' struggles, women's issues, and its orientation towards the sectarian Lebanese political system.

Through this analysis, the thesis provides a holistic approach to Hezbollah – an analysis with important implications for understanding Islamic political movements more generally.

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Introduction

Lebanon has long formed an important crossroads of the Arab world. Following World War I, the country was governed as a separate province known as Greater Lebanon under the French Mandate of Syria, only achieving independence in 1943. Since that time, Lebanon has been distinctively characterised by a formalised sectarian political system, which apportions representation between the key religious sects in the country – Maronite and various Christian denominations, Sunni and Shi'a Islam, and Druze.

Today, Lebanon's main political forces are gathered in two key political fronts largely connected to these sects: the March 14 Alliance and the March 8 Alliance. The former unites the Sunni-based Future Movement (Tayyâr al-Mustaqbal), the Druze-based Progressive Socialist Party, and two Maronite Christian parties: the Lebanese Forces (al-Quwât al-Lubnâniyya) and Lebanese Phalanges (al-Kataeb al-Lubnâniyya). The latter brings together the Shi'a based Hezbollah and Amal parties and the Maronite Christian Free Patriotic Movement (Tayyâr al-Watani al-Hurr).¹

Within this sectarian system, much of the political debate in Lebanon has focused on the role of Hezbollah and the status of its extensive armed capabilities.² Hezbollah was formed in 1985 during a period of intense political crisis characterised by Lebanese Civil War and the invasion of Lebanon by Israel in 1982. It was established as an Islamic political group, based in Shi'a-populated areas in Lebanon, with an emphasis on armed resistance against Israel. On this latter issue, the former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak acknowledged in July 2006 that "When we entered Lebanon... there was no Hezbollah. We were accepted with perfumed rice and flowers by the Shi'a in the South. It was our presence in Lebanon that created Hezbollah" (Norton 2007: 33). Over the years, Hezbollah came to be seen by many – in both Lebanon and the wider Arab world – as the only viable force able to resist Western and Israeli encroachment on the country. Following the various wars of

¹ These coalitions also include a large range of other smaller parties.

² The March 8 coalition, supported by the Syrian and Iranian governments, argue that Hezbollah has the right to keep its arms in the framework of the resistance against Israel. The March 14 coalition is dominated by Saad Hariri, son and heir of Rafiq Hariri (see Ch.3) and head of the Future Movement, and is supported by Western governments and the Gulf monarchies. March 14 seek the disarmament of Hezbollah.

aggression on Lebanon by Israel, most notably the 2006 invasion, Hezbollah was celebrated for its apparently well-disciplined, organised military and propaganda capabilities, and its ability to effectively resist the Israeli state. Portraits of Hassan Nasrallah, the movement's General Secretary, could be seen in demonstrations in major capitals in the Arab world. Even in the Gulf Arab states, where ruling governments have traditionally expressed hostility to Hezbollah, prominent individuals such as the wealthy Kuwaiti businessman Nasser Al-Kharafi have publicly praised the group (Farid 2001 and Wehbe B. 2011).³

In addition to its armed capabilities and standing in the Arab world, Hezbollah has become one of the most important political actors in Lebanon, holding a large parliamentary bloc of no less than 10 deputies since the first post Civil War legislative elections in 1992, and a minimum of two ministers in every Lebanese government since 2005. Hezbollah has confirmed its popularity by winning many municipal elections and now controls the most significant Shi'a-populated areas in the South of Greater Beirut, South Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley. The organisation is a mass movement, with an extensive network of charities and other institutions that provide needs and services for the population. Indeed, Hezbollah's social and political influence among the Shi'a population is much more significant than its ally Amal.

Hezbollah's ideology is a Shi'a-inspired version of an Islamic political movement. Islamic political movements are found across the world – from the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Egypt and elsewhere, the "*Jamaat-i-Islami*", the multiple Ulema associations, and the movement of Iranian Ayatollahs. In all these cases, Islam is erected as an absolute principle to which all demands, struggles and reforms are to be subordinated. The common denominator of all of these Islamic political movements is "Islamic fundamentalism", according to Gilbert Achcar, "in other words a will to return to Islam, the aspiration of an Islamic Utopia that is not limited to one Nation and that should encompass all the Muslim peoples, if not the whole world" (Achcar 1981:2). This definition can be seen reflected in the words of Muhammad

³ Kharafi published an article entitled "To Live in Dignity or Die with Pride" that praised Hezbollah a week before his death in April 2011. He was ranked number 77 in the 2011 Forbes Magazine list of the world's richest people, with a wealth estimated at \$11.5 billion, and was closely linked to the Kuwaiti royal family and brother of the Speaker of *Majlis al-Ummah*, the parliament of Kuwait, Jassem Al-Kharafi. Following Kharafi's death, Hezbollah issued a public statement of condolences for the Kuwaiti people and government.

Khairat Al-Shater, the former Deputy Guide of the Egyptian MB:

“The Ikhwan are working to restore Islam in its all-encompassing conception to the lives of people, and they believe that this will only come about through the strong society. Thus the mission is clear: restoring Islam in its all-encompassing conception; subjugating people to God; instituting the religion of God; the Islamization of life, empowering of God’s religion; establishing the Nahda of the Ummah on the basis of Islam... Thus we’ve learned [to start with] building the Muslim individual, the Muslim family, the Muslim society, the Islamic government, the global Islamic state...” (Amal al-Ummah TV 2011 and Bargisi, Mohameed and Pieretti 2012)

Religious fundamentalism is not limited to the Islamic religion, and we can see common elements among various religious fundamentalist movements throughout the world. It is important to note, however, that despite the call to return to an earlier age, fundamentalisms should not be seen as fossilized elements from the past. While they may employ symbols and narratives from earlier periods, fundamentalisms are alive, dynamic and representative of major contemporary trends, designed to satisfy cultural needs (Marty 1988:17). Their emergence must thus be fully situated in the political, economic and social context of the contemporary period.

In the Middle East, the rise of both Shi’a and Sunni Islamic political movements took place in a period – through the 1980s and 1990s – in which the left and nationalist forces were considerably weakened. This included the set backs of Arab nationalism (particularly Nasserism) following the 1967 war in which Israel occupied the rest of Historic Palestine (East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip), the Syrian territory of the Golan Heights and the Egyptian Sinai.⁴ Arab nationalism, which had been until that period the dominant political movement in the region, had been

⁴ The Sinai was ultimately given back to Egypt in 1981 following the peace concluded between Israel and Egypt under US patronage in 1979.

viewed by the USA as the main enemy. The USA therefore politically supported the Saudi Kingdom, which, in turn, helped foster various Sunni Islamic fundamentalist movements, most particularly the MB, as a counterweight against Arab nationalism. Israel used a similar strategy in the Palestinian Occupied Territories, particularly in the Gaza Strip, by repressing the national and progressive forces of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) and not blocking the expansion of Islamic fundamentalist forces (until the end of the 1980s) (Achcar and Chomsky 2007:50-51).

Islamic movements were also boosted by regional events starting with the 1973 Oil boom that allowed Gulf monarchies to increase their regional funding. Another issue in the weakening of the progressive forces began in the early 1970s, with the intense repression by Arab regimes such as Egypt, Syria and Iraq. Abandoning their previous radical social policies, they increasingly adopted a rapprochement with the Western countries and the monarchies of the Gulf. In Egypt, following the death of Nasser in 1970, the new regime led by Sadat used the MB to establish a tacit alliance against nationalist and progressive forces in the country (Achcar and Chomsky 2007:53 and Voll 2011:378).

Finally, Palestinian and Arab national progressive forces were weakened by the multiple attacks against the Palestinian national movement by both the Arab states and Israel. First in Jordan, in 1970, during the events known as “Black September” and the violent repression by the Jordanian regime against Palestinian and Jordanian national and progressive forces, which resulted in the PLO main political forces’ transfer to Lebanon. Secondly, in Lebanon, the Palestinian and Lebanese national and progressive forces were faced first by the harsh repression in 1976 by the Syrian regime, which entered Lebanon in order to crush them. It was then the turn of the Israeli state to attack Palestinian and Lebanese progressive and nationalist forces, which led to the forced departure of Palestinian forces from Beirut to Tunis in 1982 following Israel’s invasion of Lebanon and the siege of Beirut (Achcar and Chomsky 2007:196).

This was the regional context in which Hezbollah was formed. According to Lebanese scholar Mona Harb (2010:245), Hezbollah has since its foundation

selected and adjusted its rhetoric of justification and its mechanisms of action based on a dual logic of legitimation: one rational and the other traditional. By this, Harb (2010:245) means that Hezbollah was able to combine and alternate between a discourse of modernisation with a social and religious appeal, used differentially according to time, place, and scale. Hezbollah's popular social base among the Lebanese Shi'a population, which was first concentrated among the relatively poor Shi'a and some petit bourgeois components, was extended to encompass all social classes. Today, the party has significant political and social support among a growing Shi'a bourgeoisie, located both inside the country and in the diaspora.

Given this process of integration into the political system, and the extending social base of the organisation, a range of questions can be raised about the nature of Hezbollah as a political party and as a social force. How can we explain the politics and practice of Hezbollah in relation to the political economy of Lebanon and the country's Shi'a population? How has it been able to build such a widespread base of support amongst Shi'a in Lebanon? What is the nature of the relationship between Hezbollah and the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI)? What role do Hezbollah's military capacities play in its hegemony over Lebanese Shi'a populations? How can we explain the political and social evolution of Hezbollah?

The answers to these questions are significant both in terms of the insights they offer into Political Islam as an ideology, as well as their implications for understanding the broader political economy of Lebanon and the Middle East.

Scholarly analysis of Political Islam in general, and Hezbollah in particular, tends to divide into three contrasting approaches to these questions.⁵ The first approach characterises movements such as Hezbollah as anti-imperialist, believing that they represent an Arab variant of Latin American 'Liberation Theology', which seeks

⁵ This thesis does not engage with the normative characterisations of Hezbollah as simply a reactionary, "terrorist" or "jihadist" organisation whose violent behaviour is an inherent attribute of Islam (Klein 2010; Levitt 2013; Phares 2010). These non-scholarly approaches typically essentialise Islam as being anti-democratic and reactionary, and Hezbollah as simply "jihadists who use terrorism as their tactic of choice to realize their malignant intentions" (Klein 2013). As many authors have pointed out, there is nothing intrinsic to Islam, or any other religion, which makes it inherently democratic or undemocratic, peaceful or violent. Islam can be interpreted in many different ways, and in politics its role can act as a tool for legitimisation and for the preservation of the status quo, to being a vehicle of protest and revolution (Ayubi 1993:60).

greater social justice and a reassertion of national identity in the face of encroaching foreign values. As Rula Abisaab puts it:

“The language of revolutionary Islam contests the hegemonic positioning of the American West through a set of beliefs and practices that emerge precisely from the endless exchanges between ‘Easts’ and ‘Westes’ and proves the fallacy of fixed geopolitical-cultural boundaries. The outlook and performance of Hezbollah coincides with ‘antisystemic struggles’ that kick against the few sovereign states exploiting international labour and resources, and push against the oppressive space of the globalized world-economy. As long as Hezbollah remains outside the state and is not integrated into the communicative networks of state-world relations, it remains antisystemic... Hezbollah used and co-opted central facets of socialist and unionist activism alongside the Palestinian liberation struggle.”
(Abisaab 2006:235)

A second approach views Hezbollah as a pragmatic political party. This approach concentrates on the political programme and practices of Hezbollah reflected, for example, by their integration into a political and institutional context that they initially fully rejected. The authors supporting this approach describe Hezbollah as an evolving and non-static entity, which becomes more and more institutionalised in the political environment, leading to a moderation of its overall politics. In this respect, Judith Palmer argues that several factors encouraged Hezbollah’s transformation into a mainstream and moderate Lebanese party:

“First, Hezbollah’s transformation and integration advanced the foreign policy goals of Iran, Syria, and Lebanon and therefore the Party of God received a great deal of support of varying kinds from these governments...

Second, Hezbollah leaders tried to overcome this hurdle by developing simultaneous strategies and tactics of

accommodation with the Lebanese authorities and other Lebanese groups, and militancy towards Israel. This approach was helped by the fact that Hezbollah leaders chose to use considerable ideological flexibility to allay the suspicions of the liberal component of Lebanese society, by presenting their organisation as a moderate, national party while still retaining its Islamic appeal and pious supporters...

Third, pragmatic Hezbollah leaders were also able to adapt their organisation to Lebanese political traditions and exploit the realities that imposed themselves after the 1989 Document of National Reconciliation achieved peace.” (Harik 2004:3)

A third approach recognises the nationalist features of some of the political and military achievements of Hezbollah or other Islamic political movements, but rejects any characterisation of these organisations as inherently progressive or anti-imperialist. Instead, as Gilbert Achcar has written on Islamic political movements prior to Hezbollah, regardless of the “progressive, national and/or democratic features of some of the struggles of various currents of Islamic fundamentalism” these movements “cannot hide the fact that their ideology and program are essentially and by definition reactionary” (Achcar 1981:3).

Each of these perspectives will be analysed indepth in Chapter 1. At this stage, it is sufficient to note that this work builds upon the analytical framework of the third approach, which emphasizes a historical and materialist understanding of Political Islam and presents a valuable counter-narrative to ‘anti-imperialist’ or institutionalist assumptions that typify much of the scholarly literature. It aims to deepen this perspective, by examining the significance of recent developments in Lebanon’s political economy that can help illuminate the shifting nature of Hezbollah’s ideological and political practice. The objective of this work is to understand Hezbollah through this lens, tracking the evolution of the organisation’s structures and relationship within the wider political system, and locating this evolution within the changing class and state formation in Lebanon. In this manner, this thesis moves the debate beyond the typical focus on ideology as a means of identifying and

understanding the policies of Islamic political movements. The thesis argues that while the 'Islamic way of life' may be the professed goal of Hezbollah, its actual practices can best be understood as harmonious with – and reflective of – the nature of the capitalist environment in which it operates.

To this end, there are two key theoretical arguments advanced throughout this thesis. The first concerns the shifting terrain of class formation in the Lebanese state over the last two decades – the era of neoliberalism – and its relationship to the political practice of Hezbollah. It is argued (in Chapters 2 and 3) that while neoliberal reform in Lebanon has led to an impoverishment of significant parts of Lebanese society, it has also helped to enrich a layer of the country's Shi'a community (closely connected to the diaspora). The political practice of Hezbollah has become increasingly responsive to the concerns of this layer, to which it holds close social, political and financial ties. This is reflected in the economic programme of the organisation, as well as its attitudes towards the social and labour struggles that have emerged to contest neoliberal reform.

The second main theoretical argument employed in this thesis concerns the ways in which Hezbollah has been able to continue to build a hegemonic project within the Shi'a population, despite the contradictions arising from its political and economic trajectory. In this regard, this thesis draws upon a Gramscian analyses of hegemony, as well as the writing of the Arab scholar Mehdi Amel, who was also a prominent member of the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP), to show how Hezbollah has acted to present the interests of the Shi'a population as compatible with, and expressed through, the actions and norms of Hezbollah itself. A major feature of this hegemonic project is the deepening Islamization of the Shi'a population in Lebanon, through which Hezbollah has employed both consensual and coercive means to win dominance in Shi'a areas. Moreover, this process has important implications for how the nature of the sectarian system in Lebanon is understood.

In addition to helping conceive the evolution of Hezbollah and its place within the contemporary politics of the region, both these theoretical arguments counteract a prevailing Orientalism within much of the study of the Arab world. This Orientalism

tends to hold up the region as being beyond the grasp of social scientific frameworks typically employed to understand processes of political and change elsewhere in the world.⁶ In this regard, this thesis concurs with the conclusion of Arab writer, Aziz Al-Azmeh, that “the understanding of Islamic political phenomena requires the normal equipment of the social and human sciences, not their denial” (Al-Azmeh 2003:39).

Chapter Outline

This thesis is organised into seven main chapters. Chapter 1 outlines and assesses the various scholarly research problematics and theoretical frameworks used to approach the study of Political Islam in general, and Hezbollah in particular. The chapter discusses these themes within the wider context of academic analysis of political parties in the Arab world. It shows that a great part of this literature has tended to interpret the creation and formation of parties in this region through a lens based primarily on social, religious and other group loyalties. In this regard, the chapter examines and critiques the approaches noted above, and puts forward an alternative analytical framework focused on the processes of class formation and composition in Lebanon, and the impact of neoliberalism on the broader transformation of the region’s political economy and the nature of political parties. It concludes with outlining how Hezbollah’s ideological expression can help in understanding the widespread appeal of Hezbollah within the Shi’a community.

Chapter 2 looks at the origins of sectarianism in Lebanon from the time of the French Mandate through to the end of the Civil War (1975-1990). The chapter traces the position of different sectarian communities over this period, and analyses the impact of the Civil War on the political and social conditions of the Shi’a population in particular. This period coincides with the establishment of Hezbollah in 1985, and provides important insights into its subsequent evolution. Throughout this chapter, sectarianism is viewed as a political product of modern times used by the Lebanese bourgeoisie to intervene ideologically in the class struggle, strengthening its control

⁶ As Palestinian American Professor Edward Said wrote: “Human history is made by human beings. Since the struggle for control over territory is part of that history, so too is the struggle over historical and social meaning. The task for the critical scholar is not to separate one struggle from another, but to connect them despite the contrast between the overpowering materiality of the former and the apparent otherworldly refinements of the latter” (Said 1978:331-2).

of the popular classes and keeping them subordinated to their sectarian leaders (Amel 1986:323+326-327). Along these lines, this thesis considers sectarianism as a product of modern times and not a tradition from immemorial ages. As Lebanese scholar Ussama Makdissi, has noted, “sectarianism is a modern story, and for those intimately involved in its unfolding, it is the modern story – a story that has and that continues to define and dominate their lives” (Makdissi 2000:2).

Chapter 3 studies the evolution of the Lebanese political economy from 1990 to 2013, the period covering the end of the Civil War until today. The chapter focuses in particular on the Shi’a population, whose political and socio-economic situation was significantly lower than other Lebanese religious sects at the end of the Lebanese Civil War and has since changed considerably. We will see the changes in the position and stratification of the Shi’a population as a result of neoliberal policies, and the connection of these changes to the development of Hezbollah as a political organisation.

A major objective of this chapter is to understand the origins and consequences of the neoliberal policies promoted by former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, who was the main actor on the Lebanese political scene following the end of the Civil War (1975-1990). Hariri’s economic policies were supported, or at least not consistently opposed, by the major political forces in the country including Hezbollah. These neoliberal policies led to the deepening of the historically constituted characteristics of the Lebanese economy: a finance and service oriented development model in which social inequalities and regional disparities were very pronounced. The chapter discusses the consequences of these characteristics as they developed through the neoliberal period, and the subsequent political orientation of Hezbollah towards both economic policy and the sectarian political system. It concludes with a survey of three specific case studies in areas where Hezbollah has significant influence and control: (1) management of urban policy in the municipal neighbourhood of Ghobeyri, (2) attitudes towards rent-control laws in Beirut and (3) agricultural policy in the Bekaa Valley.

Having established these developmental trends over the neoliberal period, Chapter 4

examines their implications for Lebanon's class structure, in particular amongst the Shi'a population. The chapter demonstrates that the neoliberal period saw the emergence of a new Shi'a bourgeoisie within various sectors of the economy, and the resulting re-balancing of sectarian power across the country. This process, however, was not evenly distributed, and many Shi'a remain marginalised throughout significant urban and rural areas. The chapter then turns to a concrete mapping of the new Shi'a bourgeoisie through an analysis of the largest Shi'a business groups and their relationship to Hezbollah itself. These factors are then brought together in an analysis of the changing social base of the party.

Chapter 5 traces the growth of the party as a mass movement and attempts to understand how the party managed to achieve a position of hegemony in Shi'a areas despite the tensions arising from the nature of its social base. This chapter examines in detail the internal organisation of the party and its large network of institutions. The latter played an important role in diffusing the ideas of the party through the Shi'a community and extending its hegemony through the provision of much-needed services. The chapter analyses how the success of Hezbollah's network of organisations, managed mostly from Hezbollah's Executive Council, allowed it to strengthen its position amongst the population, focusing in particular on four critical sectors: (1) Social support, (2) Religious institutions, (3) Media and Culture, and (4) Education/Youth work. The chapter explores the ideological content of Hezbollah's work in these sectors, emphasising the role that two concepts – *hâla islâmiyya* (the Islamic milieu) and *iltizâm* (personal commitment) – have played in building allegiance to the party. It also analyses the distinctively gendered characteristic of these ideological underpinnings of the party's work.

Chapter 6 turns to Hezbollah's orientation towards the Lebanese labour movement. Beginning with the history of the trade union movement through the Civil War period, the chapter examines the various social and worker protests that continued through the 1990s and into the contemporary period. It shows how the General Union of Lebanese Workers (GULW), the main trade union confederation, was progressively weakened by the main bourgeois and sectarian political forces and subordinated to their interests, because they feared the GULW's capacity of mobilisation. In this

regard, Hezbollah's behaviour towards various economic demands, strikes and the organisation of labour is analysed. The chapter thus provides a link between the political economy analyses provided in Chapters 3 and 4, and the socio-political analysis of Chapter 5. In this manner, it offers an important illustration of the tensions that have arisen in the organisation as a result of its claim to represent the struggles and needs of the poorer ranks of the Shi'a population, concomitant with its changing social base.

Chapter 7 analyses a crucial aspect of Hezbollah's organisation: its military activities and armed apparatus. The chapter begins by examining Hezbollah's military struggle against the Israeli state, followed by its coercive activities towards other Lebanese actors during the Lebanese Civil War and, later, in 2008, when it led military operations against the March 14 coalition. Hezbollah's use of its military capacities to guarantee its power and security in the region is also analysed. The concluding chapter brings together this overall analysis in both a theoretical and political sense.

Methodology

This study draws upon a wide range of academic writing in the fields of politics, political economy, sociology and development theory. As the following chapter will outline in greater detail, its basic theoretical framework is based upon Marxian and other critical analyses of Lebanon and the Middle East. In addition to the academic literature, research for the thesis has involved a detailed textual analysis of many books, newspaper articles, reports, political pamphlets and written interviews of key political personalities in Lebanon. Although the thesis relies mostly on secondary material, my fluency in English, Arabic and French has enabled me to conduct interviews and consult primary material in the language of the sources and documentation used to establish the findings of this thesis.

In addition to the insights gained from these written materials, I spent over 12 months in Lebanon conducting fieldwork, from August 2011 to September 2012. During this time I was able to travel extensively throughout Beirut, the Bekaa Valley, and the southern and the northern regions of the country. This research period, which

included wide-ranging consultation with activists, trade unionists, workers, students, members of political parties and academics was a valuable complement to my previous experience in the country. More than 40 people were interviewed in relation to this study during my fieldwork in Lebanon (conducted in Arabic, French and English depending on the circumstances), and I also learnt from countless 'off the record' discussions with individuals and groups involved in Lebanon's political scene. Moreover, my time in Lebanon allowed me the opportunity to consult various libraries, archives and research centres in Lebanon, including: American University of Beirut, Lebanese American University, University of Saint Joseph, Institute for Palestine Studies in Beirut, Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies in Beirut, and the Consultative Centre for Studies and Documentation (CCSD).

Given the political environment of Lebanon, this fieldwork was faced with numerous obstacles. Firstly, accessing Hezbollah officials has become more difficult than in the past because of internal security measures within the party and the secrecy of the organisation. I nevertheless obtained some interviews with Hezbollah-affiliated intellectuals and party representatives in the organisation's mass fronts and research institutes. I also met with rank-and-file sympathisers and members of the party. Throughout this process, I had to take into account the highly sectarian atmosphere of the country when assessing the information I gathered. My long involvement with and knowledge of Lebanese politics helped me assess the more ideological and biased claims made by some sources.

Finally, my own personal vantage point contributed greatly towards the writing and framing of this thesis. I am a Swiss citizen of Syrian origin. I have spent long periods in Syria and in the region since my childhood. My family and close friends have been affected by the on-going events in Syria, and a large number of them have had to leave the city of Aleppo (where we are originally from), to other safer parts of the country or to neighbouring states. My interest in Hezbollah long predates the party's involvement in Syria, but the events of recent years have helped me to corroborate and refine many of the arguments made below.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Perspectives: Understanding Hezbollah and Political Islam

1.1 Introduction

In the Arab world, political parties have existed formally for more than a century as instruments for political mobilisation and for the organisation of political contests and elections (Catusse and Karam 2010:1). The party is therefore not a 'new' object in the region (Salamé 1991 and 2001). According to Catusse and Karam (2010:21), the scholarly study of parties can be periodised in two phases: the first, following the stabilisation of independent regimes throughout the mid-1960s and 1970s; the second, from the mid-1990s onwards, with the onset of liberalisation and the rise of Political Islam (Catusse and Karam 2010:21). It is this second period, particularly associated with the growth of parties such as Hezbollah and Hamas, which forms the main subject of enquiry for this thesis.

This chapter aims to survey and assess contending theoretical approaches to understanding the nature of Hezbollah as a political party. In doing so, it explores the specific debates around the nature of Political Islam and Hezbollah and identifies two dominant approaches to the latter. First, the assessment of Hezbollah as an Islamic-world variant of Liberation Theology, i.e. an anti-imperialist party that expresses resistance to Western encroachment within a discourse shaped by the specific religious and cultural values of the Middle East. This trend is quite prominent amongst some European scholars and is also found within the Arab literature. The second perspective, more recent in nature, attempts to categorise Hezbollah as a pragmatic political party, which differs little from other political actors that seek to ensure their position within the Lebanese political system.

In opposition to both of these perspectives, this thesis draws upon a third body of literature. While recognising the significance of Hezbollah's militancy and armed resistance, the third approach places greater emphasis on the role of its religious ideology in structuring its socio-political orientation while assessing the class basis of the party. This largely Marxian-inspired approach provides a theoretical framework

for analysing Hezbollah that allows for a well-rounded consideration of its ideological, religious and socio-economic facets.

In this regard, this chapter focuses on the early contributions of the Lebanese scholar and political activist popularly known as Mehdi Amel, but whose real name was Hassan Abdallah Hamdan. Amel was an important figure on the Lebanese left who provided an innovative approach to understanding the character of sectarianism in the Arab world. Assassinated in 1987 by Islamic militants widely believed to be close to Hezbollah (Nassif-Debs 2006), his insights remain highly salient for setting out a theoretical framework for understanding the party. The focus on Mehdi Amel is all the more significant given that his work has rarely been translated into English, and is generally ignored by Western Middle East scholars.

This chapter begins by exploring the methodological assumptions and questions asked by the key scholars working within these three approaches. While the focus of this analysis is the literature on Hezbollah, it necessarily requires some discussion of the nature of political parties in the Arab world and Islamic political movements more generally. The chapter concludes by laying out the main theoretical positions that will be employed in the subsequent chapters of the thesis. These are mostly grounded within the literature of the third critical approach to Hezbollah explored below, while also drawing upon the work of other writers within the Marxian tradition, notably Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser.

1.2 Islamic Political Movements: An Arab Mode of Resistance?

Much of the academic literature on political parties in the Arab world employs an essentialist or culturalist lens, in which a supposed original and distinct feature of the Arab world shapes the nature of its parties and distinguishes it from other societies. A common theme of this literature is the supposed weight of 'group loyalty' within Arab society – whether expressed through personal or familial ties,⁷ tribal belonging as in

⁷ Elizabeth Picard (2006:57), French academic, explains, for example, how, when faced with a wide variety of options within a particular social setting, individuals and groups in the Arab world tend to favour those that involve family relationships (whether by descent or marriage) and argues that parties are merely the institutional form of these family ties.

the concept of *asabiyyat*,⁸ religious fidelity or through a so-called Arabness.⁹ These qualities emphasize the primacy of social bonds – family, clan, ethnic or communitarian groupings – that are said to surpass any shared class or material interests and thus differentiate parties in the Arab world from those in European societies (Badie 1989; El-Kourani 2004; Charaf Eddin 2006).¹⁰ As ‘empty shells’ constructed along loyalty to a group and largely void of ideological principles, Arab parties are said to reproduce authoritarian and personalised forms of behaviour (Catusse and Karam 2010:11). This characteristic has been used to explain the party form – typically centred around a ‘strong man’, a clan or tribal group such as the Takritis in the case of the Iraqi Ba’th party (Luizard 1998:258), or a confessional/religious community such as parties in Lebanon (El-Khazen 2003:605-606).

These essentialist themes also characterise a significant stream of academic writing on Political Islam, in which Islam is said to represent the genuine, essential spirit of the Arab world – one that is reflected on the cultural and linguistic planes. From this perspective, which is represented in the work of both Western (Carré and Gérard 1983; Roy 1985; Burgat 1995; Dot Pouillard 2009; Jensen 2009) and Arab scholars (Abd El-Malek 1970; Hanafi 1988), Political Islam constitutes the Arab expression of cultural and social resistance to Western encroachment. The strong group ties that characterise Islam allow it to become a vehicle for challenging Western Imperialism, enabling the Arab population to resist threats to their identity and emancipate themselves politically, economically and socially. Olivier Carré (1983 cited in Achcar 2013b:50), for example, describes Political Islam in the 1980s as the “popular culture of the Muslim world that is managing to express itself at last after having been muffled successively by colonialism and post-independence regimes”. He goes on to assert that religiosity is a permanent and essential phenomenon of Arab societies.

⁸ This notion originates in the work of the 14th century scholar from North Africa, Ibn Khaldoun, and implies a particular ‘social bond’ that connects tribal and familial groups across a region. Khaldoun’s concept was later developed by Middle East scholars to encompass group solidarity based on social networks constructed through family and personal relationships (Roy 1996:6).

⁹ For example Georges Saddikni, who was until the end of 1970s a member of the Damascus-based Ba’th party’s National (pan-Arab) Command and head of its Bureau for Cultural Affairs, and was Syria’s Minister of Information for many years, in his book ‘Man, Reason and Synonyms’, written in 1978, proposed in this latter to study certain ‘basic’ words in the Arabic language as a means to attaining ‘genuine knowledge’ of some of the essential characteristics of the primordial Arab mentality’ underlying those very words. (Al-Azm 2008:169)

¹⁰ Badie (1989:14), for example, argues that the features of parties in the European context would be “non-transferable” to Arab countries because of the primacy of group loyalties rather than class interests.

Likewise, François Burgat (1995 cited in Achcar 2013:54) characterises “Political Islam as a need of a return to the cultural roots throughout the Muslim world”. Political Islam is the mode of expression of cultural resistance appropriate to the Arab world – the ‘Muslim speech’ (“le parler musulman”) (1995 cited in Achcar 2013:55).

Much of this writing draws an analogy between Islamic movements and Third World nationalism. The prominent scholar Olivier Roy and others such as Nicolas Dot Pouillard, two writers within this school of thought, argue that contemporary Islamic movements have adapted notions of anti-imperialism and models of revolution found elsewhere in the world, making them fit the cultural context of the Arab world (Dot Pouillard 2009:193-194). Dot Pouillard, for example, contends that “Hezbollah adopts a Third-World speech, based on the South-North opposition and *mustakbar* (arrogant) / *mustad’afin* (oppressed)” (Dot Pouillard 2007). Nicolas Dot Pouillard claims that this has important global implications, such that “the opening of the Islamo-nationalist movement on the left can indeed open a new pan-Arab nationalism... it may lead to the re-emergence of a Third-World and nationalist pole on an international scale” (Dot Pouillard 2009:193-194).

This rhetoric of Hezbollah around the *mustakbar* (arrogant) vs *mustad’afin* (oppressed) is directly linked to the former Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) Ayatollah Khomeini’s ideology and the evolution in his political discourse. In the 1970s and early 1980s, Khomeini adopted a militant rhetoric borrowed especially from the “Mujahidin”, the Confederation of Iranian Students in exile and Ali Shariati, a famous Iranian intellectual and opponent to the regime of the Shah, all of whom were strongly influenced by contemporary Marxism – especially Castroism and Maoism according to Ervand Abrahamian (1993:23). Khomeini declared during this period that the Iranian society is now divided into two classes: the upper class (*tabaqeh-e bala*) or *mustakbirin* (the oppressors) and the lower class (*tabaqeh-e payin*) or *mustad’afin* (oppressed). The oppressors were notably identified as the rich, the exploiters, the powerful, the feudalists, the capitalists, the palace dwellers, the corrupt, the enjoyers of luxury, and the wealthy elite, while the oppressed were the exploited, the powerless, the slum dwellers, the barefooted, the hardworking poor, the hungry, the unemployed, the disinherited masses, and those deprived of

education, work, housing, and medical facilities (Abrahamian 1993:47). This stage was foundational to Hezbollah's belief system, and corresponded to the establishment and the launch of the party in 1982.

In its first official document in 1985, Hezbollah adopted the same terminologies, choosing to use the term "*mustad'afin*", rather than "*mahrumin*" (deprived) as had Moussa Sadr, founder of the Amal movement. Mona Harb and Robert Leenders explain how Hezbollah's discourse and word choice around:

"the resistance society modifies the perception of Shi'a individuals as "disinherited" (or "dispossessed") (*mahrumin*) to one of being "disempowered" (*mustad'afin*). The nuance is essential, as the latter invokes an opportunity for transformation and change, whereas the former involves stagnation. Through its holistic approach Hezbollah transforms the typical Shi'a victimisation complex into meaningful values of justice, solidarity, community, sacrifice, progress, etc – which, in turn, instigates high self-esteem and a solid sense of pride." (Harb and Leenders 2005:189)

These same themes are also found in the Arabic language literature. The Egyptian intellectual Anouar Abd El-Malek, for example, defends the idea that "authenticity lies in Islamic heritage which is embedded in the hearts and minds of the masses and stands in contrast to the imported political and cultural ideas of western ideologies and intellectuals" (1970 cited in Browers 2009:29), adding that an authentic collective identity is a substitute for Marxist class consciousness. Likewise, the Egyptian philosopher Hassan Hanafi claims that "Political Islam acts to mobilise the revolutionary impulse of the Islamic heritage, ever-present in the hearts and minds of the masses, in order to fight local oppression and foreign hegemony and to struggle against the unjust distribution of wealth within the Islamic nation" (1988 cited in Kassab 2010:200).

In the opinion of many of these authors, Hezbollah provides the best manifestation of

this progressive character of Political Islam (Saad Ghorayeb 2002; Charara and Dromont 2004; Dot Pouillard 2009). Often describing Hezbollah as 'Islamist nationalist', the party is said to be the only political actor with popular legitimacy, representing the national aspirations of the people in a discourse appropriate to Arab cultural norms. They thus place a great deal of emphasis on identifying the 'anti-imperialist' characteristics of Hezbollah (Deeb L. 2007) and similar parties (notably Hamas (Danino 2009)).

Methodologically, this leads to a focus on Hezbollah's armed resistance, particularly in relation to Israel (Blanford 2011; Jaber 2010). Ahmad Jaber (2010), for example, describes Hezbollah as a party with one mission, the struggle against the Israeli occupation, which structures both: (a) the patterns of its alliances with other political actors such as Syria, Iran and national Lebanese parties and (b) the character of its own party institutions. Abd Al-Ilah Belkeziz, Secretary General of the Moroccan Arab Forum in Rabat and previous head of the Studies Department at the Beirut-based Arab Unity Studies Centre (Arab Media Forum 2012), also uses Hezbollah's armed resistance as the key element for approaching his understanding of the party. Belkeziz adds that in addition to armed resistance, the social services and religious networks of the party allow it to realize a hegemonic ideology among Shi'a masses (Belkeziz 2006).

This focus on Hezbollah's armed activities has led some scholars to argue that the Islamic aspect of the party has become subordinate to its resistance goals. Aurelie Daher (2014:24), describes Hezbollah as embodying an Islam of resistance because their arms are not aimed at the Islamization of the society or at attaining political power. Indeed, she argues that Hezbollah should not be called an Islamist party. Instead, the emphasis on armed struggle means that we should use terms such as "militant Islam", "Islamic militancy" and "Islamic movements or currents" to describe the party. According to her perspective (Daher 2014:25), Islam is seen by the leaders of the party as a tool to serve the armed struggle. Echoing the essentialist themes described above, Hezbollah's religious practices and symbolic referents are the means appropriate to the Arab world for legitimising the cause of the resistance against Israel.

Another illustration of how these approaches tend to conceptualise Islam as the distinctive, essential feature of the Arab world, and thus providing a locally-specific form to ideologies found elsewhere, is the argument made by some authors that Political Islam is an Arab version of left-wing discourse. The comments of Dot Pouillard cited above are one indication of this perspective. Likewise, the feminist scholar Judith Butler has stated that “I think: yes, understanding Hamas, Hezbollah as social movements that are progressive, that are on the left, that are part of a global left, is extremely important”, adding nevertheless that this should “not stop us from being critical of certain dimensions of both movements” (Anonymous 2010). The noted Hezbollah scholar, Amal Saad Ghorayeb (2002:16), has argued that Hezbollah’s conception of *mustad’afin* is analogous to the secular designation of the oppressed found in Frantz Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth*. In her view, there is an “Islamization of class analysis whose defining elements, exploitation and poverty, become Islamic virtue” (Saad Ghorayeb 2002:16). This left-wing character has even been characterised as a kind of subconscious impulse, of which Hezbollah itself is not fully cognisant. Nahla Chahal (2006 and Den Hond and Qualander 2007), for example, writes that “Hezbollah is not yet aware that it is a movement of the Theology of Liberation”.

Evidence for the party’s leftist character is sometimes found in the widespread social and charitable institutions of the parties, used to build a popular base and provide a vehicle for struggle around social justice (Saad Ghorayeb 2002; Charara and Domont 2004; Pearson and Salamey 2007), (see Chapter 5). As’ad Abu Khalil (1991:394) goes further than most in this regard, arguing that Hezbollah is an Islamic adaptation of a revolutionary Leninist organisation. *Ulema*, religious scholars in the Islamic tradition, resemble the apparatchiks of the high nomenklatura. He goes on to point out that a number of the cadres of the parties, including *ulema* trained in Iranian centres of religious learning such as Najaf or in Qom, joined leftist Lebanese political parties in the 1960s and 1970s and imported into Hezbollah an organisational structure and Leninist political culture (Abu Khalil 1991:396-398). In the same vein, Imad Salameya and Frederic Pearson have described Hezbollah as an “anti-capitalist political movement” and “revolutionary styled vanguard party” (Pearson and

Salamey 2007:420). They add:

“Hezbollah has offered a permanent class struggle with godly support that links national liberation with cultural cleansing and class emancipation. While indigenously Lebanese, centred in the Shi’a communities, Hezbollah’s revolution has been Trotskyite in its international appeal, for no national borders, doctrinal differences or democratic stages precondition its revolutionary appeal... Seen in this light, Hezbollah has emerged as a revolutionary proletarian party with an Islamic manifesto par excellence.” (Pearson and Salamey 2007:422)

This thesis will demonstrate that these perspectives are misplaced for several reasons. First, their narrow focus on the question of armed resistance leads analysts to downplay or ignore the attitude of Hezbollah towards specific social, political and economic issues in Lebanon itself. Later chapters will address this theme in some detail, arguing that the party has consistently adapted itself to the neoliberal trajectories of successive Lebanese governments despite a rhetorical opposition to some of these policies. Second, these approaches take for granted the sectarian political system in the country without subjecting the existence of this system and its role in the country’s power relations to a thoroughgoing analysis. Third, the allegedly leftist impulse of Hezbollah is largely posited without any concrete analysis of the party’s relationship to Lebanon’s class structure, specifically the evolution and changing character of the Shi’a population. A major theme of this thesis is an attempt to map this class structure in some detail, examining how Hezbollah’s orientation has reflected – in a contradictory manner – the changing fortunes of different layers of the Shi’a in Lebanon. Finally, the cultural and ideological programme of Hezbollah needs to be understood beyond simply its expression of armed resistance. Instead, as Chapter 5 will show, Hezbollah has used a particular ideological discourse to build its hegemony within the Shi’a population through a combined means of consent and coercion. This has a particularly important gendered component, which is often ignored by scholars writing in the ‘anti-imperialist’ tradition.

1.3 Hezbollah: a Pragmatic Political Party

The second school of thought regarding Hezbollah emphasizes the party's institutional relationship and role within the Lebanese political system. These scholars reject the essentialist features of the first paradigm discussed above, arguing that Hezbollah can be understood through its similarities with other political parties in Europe and elsewhere. Most particularly, the party, despite an initial rejection of the Lebanese political system, has become increasingly institutionalised into existing political structures through its participation in elections and its attempt to expand its constituency to all strata of society. This has led, in turn, to a moderation of its overall politics.

Along these lines, some authors have argued that Hezbollah has transformed itself from a radical and clandestine militia to a moderate mainstream political party with a resistance wing, and in the process adapted its political discourse in order to more effectively reach a wider public (Corm 2003; Harik 2004; Norton 2007; Samaan 2007; Harb 2010; Qassir 2011). These authors believe that the partial or complete integration of Hezbollah into the Lebanese political scene has led to the increasing adaptation of its ideological principles to the national political environment (Louër 2008). For example, Mona Harb explains that the Lebanese party must make ideological and political compromises and develop an appropriate public discourse to justify short-term strategic alliances that appear to be against principles of the party. These alliances include agreements with its main competitor in the Shi'a population, Amal (discussed further in the following chapter), joint lists with former enemies such as Elie Hobeika (an ex-leader of the Lebanese Forces (LF)) and Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) (Harb 2010:235).

In this regard, a number of authors have pointed to what they call a "Lebanonization" of Hezbollah. Hezbollah and its General Secretary Hassan Nasrallah have used the concept of '*Infitâh*' (opening) – a more nuanced term that allowed Hezbollah to maintain the pretence of impartiality and an ability to distinguish itself from other Lebanese parties (Di Peri 2014:496). This process is said to have begun with Hezbollah's approval of the 1989 Ta'if agreement, which officially ended the

Lebanese Civil War. The subsequent integration of the party into the sectarian political system was demonstrated particularly by its participation in the legislative elections of 1992 (Usher 1997:63-64; Samii 2008:42). Through this process, the party has reconciled its Islamic agenda with a form of Lebanese nationalism. All this while 'nationalizing' its discourse around the resistance, in other words military confrontation against Israel, since the beginning of the 1990s (Harb and Leenders 2005:183-187; Yadav 2010:203). According to Wörn (2009:131), the inclusion of the party in the sectarian political system was the price that had to be paid in order for it to continue to legitimize itself as a resistance force capable of defending the country from Israel. Accompanying this process of political incorporation, the party has increasingly characterized its goal of an 'Islamic state' as a utopian ideal that was not possible due to Lebanon's religious diversity; indeed, party leaders have celebrated this religious diversity in numerous articles and speeches (Harb and Leenders 2005:179; Høigilt 2007:128). This supposed acceptance of diversity is provided as further indication of Hezbollah's pragmatic turn – a necessary means to promote its political interests and protect its military organisation (Hamzeh 2004:132-133; Hazran 2010:524).

These authors present a useful counterpoint to essentialist views of the party, emphasising instead Hezbollah's non-static and continuously evolving nature. This insight has enabled scholars to better grasp Hezbollah's political alliances and their changing institutional context. Elizabeth Picard (2007:93), for example, speaks of the growing pragmatism and moderation of the civilian cadres of the party at the national and local levels, including the development at the municipal level of clientelist relations with its electorate. This is not very different from other political parties. Similarly, the pressure that arises from the need to maintain its position in the political system has led Hezbollah to become reliant on the traditional large families that dominate the Shi'a population, the so-called *zu'ama* (see following chapter). Lara Deeb and Mona Harb (2012), for example, have pointed to the relationship between Hezbollah and the prominent Al-Miqdad family, who have provided the party with electoral endorsements, funding and other kinds of support. They emphasize that the party cannot afford to antagonise these family organisations. Similarly, Aurelie Daher (2012) has discussed the way that Hezbollah had to take into account the influence of tribes and clans in the 2004 municipal elections in the northern district of the

Bekaa Valley, attempting to learn from their loss in the earlier 1998 elections.

This institutionalist approach provides an analysis of the root causes of Hezbollah's integration into Lebanese politics. The party's increasing pragmatism is often seen as a response to regional pressures (notably from Iran and Syria) in order to give these regional forces greater influence in the country's political rule (Mervin 2008a:82-83). Sometimes the argument falls into tautological forms of analysis where pragmatism is simply assumed as given – thereby becoming an explanation for itself – or as the natural outgrowth of political participation (Corm 2005:184). This thesis will attempt to provide a more convincing explanation of Hezbollah's apparent moderation and pragmatism through an analysis of the changing character of its social base in the Shi'a population. As noted above, I argue that Hezbollah's politics are best understood as reflecting the contradictory class position of the Shi'a itself: the increasing subordination of the party to an emerging Shi'a bourgeoisie coupled with the growing polarisation of power and wealth within the community as a whole. The integration of Hezbollah into the political system, as well as its orientation towards various social movements (notably labour, as will be discussed in Chapter 6), must be located within these socio-economic changes.

1.4 Critical Perspectives

A third body of literature concerning Political Islam puts forward a much more rounded analysis of these political parties by attempting to situate them in the class and social dynamics of the Arab world. Writers in this school of thought include: Aziz Al-Azmeh, Asef Bayat, Gilbert Achcar, Sadiq Jalal Al-Azm, Aijaz Ahmad, Fawaz Traboulsi and political activists such as Chris Harman and Luiza Toscano. All of these authors acknowledge the resistance element characteristic of Islamic movements such as Hezbollah, but argue that this is not enough to classify them as anti-imperialist, left-wing or progressive. Most significantly, they contend that elevating one aspect of these parties' practices over other considerations leads scholars to overlook the ways in which organisations like Hezbollah project themselves vis-à-vis the self-mobilisation of social movements or the existing political and economic status quo. Moreover, in contradiction to the two approaches outlined

above, this third critical approach attempts to offer an analysis of the class base that underlies these movements.

These authors reject the essentialist claims about Arab society that form the methodological basis of the 'anti-imperialist' approach. Rather than assuming that Islam is some kind of authentic expression of Arab identity, they present a critique of the ideological underpinnings of Political Islam, particularly its goal of re-establishing an Islamic 'Golden Age'. As Gilbert Achcar (1981:3) has emphasized, the 'will to return to Islam' is the common denominator of various movements from the Sunni MB to the Shi'a Hezbollah. Achcar (1981:3) consequently characterises these movements as 'Islamic fundamentalist', because they posit a return to a supposed utopia of the past as a means of solving the problems of today (a utopia that is not limited to a single nation but encompasses all Muslim peoples in the region, if not the world). Their vision of how individuals and societies should behave, including gender relations, is structured by this religious fundamentalism and is in no way progressive (Achcar 2006). Nevertheless, according to Achcar, this element has not prevented parties such as Hezbollah from adapting to the specificities of the Lebanese multi-confessional society. He acknowledges their full integration into the Lebanese political system, including holding ministerial posts, while acting as a sectarian political force like other political parties in the country. In this regard, Achcar's work provides an important alternative to analyse which downplays the party's political and economic record – noting that, like other fundamentalist Islamic parties, Hezbollah has not challenged neoliberal policies in Lebanon or the sectarian configuration of the political system (Achcar with Warschawski 2006:35).

Other Arab writers have also identified the way in which Islamic movements prioritise a religious conception of the world, notably the goal of returning to a supposedly pristine 'Golden Age' of Islam, as a means of explaining contemporary politics.¹¹ Sadiq Jalal Al-Azm (2008:170), for example, highlights how this culturalist and

¹¹ In many respects, these authors follow the pioneering analysis of Political Islam developed by the late Maxime Rodinson (1978) in his 1970s comments over the character of the Iranian revolution. Rodinson argued that while the Iranian revolution may hold anti-American and anti-Western positions, the regime sought to return to an archaic order from times past. In defence of universalism, Rodinson stated: "we cannot think the role of Islam as an ideology at the present time other than in a context of class struggle and that the Islamic world is no exception to the general laws of human history" (Rodinson 1966:235).

idealised view of the past has led to a hermetic closure of Islamic thought to socio-economic structures, politics, historical changes, class conflicts, revolutions etc. Similarly, Aziz Al-Azmeh (1993:60) critiques the notion that the liberation and development of Arab countries depend firstly upon an assertion of an Islamic identity posited as “permanent” and “eternal”. He contrasts the opposition expressed by nationalist and socialist movements in the past, which were forward looking and opposed to socio-economic structures of oppression and domination, to that of Islamic movements of today that frame the struggle as a battle of cultures. Even the conceptualisation of imperialism has been changed within Islamic discourse, shifting away from a political economy analysis that views the Arab nation as part of the Third-World and subject to similar relations of exploitation towards notions such as “Satans big or small” and the opposition between the forces of faith and the infidels (Al-Azmeh 1993:61).¹² As explained by Gilbert Achcar, the United States are not considered as “the imperialists” but rather as the “Great Satan”, while Saddam Hussein is firstly an “atheist” and an “infidel”.¹³ On a similar note he adds that Israel is, for the Islamic movements, “the Jewish usurper of a sacred Islamic land” rather than the Zionist usurper of Palestinian territory (Achcar 1981:3).

This critique has important implications for understanding Hezbollah’s approach to armed struggle against Israel and its conception of Zionism. While Hezbollah’s role in military resistance was indeed a critical factor in the organisation’s support within Shi’a areas (and indeed the wider Arab world), the party conceives this in religious terms rather than as an anti-colonial political struggle. This can be seen in the way Hezbollah continues to use the words Zionism and Judaism in an interchangeable and synonymous manner. This has meant that Hezbollah leaders frequently employ anti-Semitic tropes that essentialise Jews as evil. *Sheikh* Naim Qassem has written, “the History of Jews has proven that, regardless of the Zionist proposal, they are the people who are evil in their ideas” (cited in Saad Ghorayeb 2002:174). Former Hezbollah Secretary General Abbas Al-Mussawi, killed in an Israeli operation,

¹² James Piscatori (1994:363) also cites the following examples regarding Islamic fundamentalist discourses against their opponents: “Mubarak’s Egypt has become “*Dâr Al-Kufr*” (land of unbelief), Saddam’s Iraq is a “*jahili*” society, and Israel is the descendant of both the evil Banu Isra’il of ancient times and the treacherous Jews of Prophetic time depicted in the *Qur’an*”.

¹³ The Shi’a Islamic fundamentalist movements in Iraq for example accused the Ba’th regime of being anti-Islamic, a “satanic Aflaqite party” that excels in its “Crusader-Masonic hatred towards the Islamic People of Iraq and Iran alike”. In addition Saddam Hussein is defined as the enemy of religion and the *Qur’an* (Baram 1994:566-567),

declared that “according to the *Qu’ranic* interpretation of Jewish history, the problem with the Jewish people lies in their religious creed” (cited in Saad Ghorayeb 2002:174). Hassan Nasrallah has also employed such a discourse on occasion saying, “If we searched the entire world for a person more cowardly, despicable, weak and feeble in psyche, mind, ideology and religion, we would not find anyone like the Jew. Notice I do not say the Israeli” (cited in Saad Ghorayeb 2002:170). In events organized by Hezbollah, it is not unusual to see books by the French intellectual Roger Garaudy, who denied the project of Jewish extermination by Hitler and the existence of gas chambers.¹⁴ In February 2006, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah described Garaudy as “a great French philosopher” who exposed the “alleged Jewish Holocaust in Germany ... [Garaudy] proved that this Holocaust is a myth” (MEMRI TV 2006).

Comments such as these point to the importance placed by critical scholars on unpacking Hezbollah’s religious and essentialist view of human history. In this regard critics have noted how Hezbollah’s discourse echoes the ‘clash of civilizations’ approach of Samuel Huntington, where the struggle against the West is based upon a rejection of its values and religious system rather than exploitative global relations (Saad Ghorayeb 2002:88).¹⁵ It is noteworthy that Hezbollah believes this ‘clash’ goes back to the early origins of Islam in the seventh century (Saad Ghorayeb 2002:89).¹⁶ This fact is often overlooked or downplayed by those analysts who attempt to frame Hezbollah as an anti-imperialist party.¹⁷

¹⁴ Personal observation during a Hezbollah event in 2012 Dahyeh Beirut

¹⁵ Hezbollah’s opposition to foreign actors takes its ideological source from the Islamic Republic of Iran’s opposition to what it called “Westoxication” and “Eastoxication”. “Westoxication” was considered to be a pathology that took its source in the total and irrational fascination with everything Western at the expense of the indigenous culture’s heritage, while “Eastoxication” was a pathological obsession among intellectuals with Marxist and communist ideologies. The latter were accused of having detached themselves from the masses by negating religion as “the opiate of the masses and serving the interests of the colonial powers in the Soviet Camp. The solution to both problems was a return to the national self, in other words an Iranian Islamic identity” (Tehrani 1993:363).

¹⁶ Despite this hostility to Western civilisation, Hezbollah’s overall discourse also displays a flexibility connected to its relationship with Iran. According to Norton (2000:25), in 1999 Hezbollah’s leading officials, including Shura Council and Political Bureau members, had privately explored the possibility of a dialogue with the United States.

¹⁷ Charara and Dromont (2004:105-107), for example, characterise the Khomeinist discourse adopted by Hezbollah, as anti-imperialist because it designates the US as the main enemy of the peoples of the region and claim that Israeli policies are opposed because they are colonial. Others deny this anti-Semitism by pointing to the fact that Hezbollah has invited Jewish non-Zionist personalities to events, such as Noam Chomsky and Norman Finkelstein (Daher 2014:131). These perspectives, however, tend to completely ignore the actual content of Hezbollah’s discourse.

In line with this critique, scholars have also opposed the analogy between the Liberation Theology movement in South America and Islamic movements in the Middle East. Asef Bayat (2010:50 and 83) points out that these two movements have different natures and objectives: the first is not an expression of supposed cultural identity or self-preservation vis-à-vis a dominating Western 'other', but rather emphasizes a discourse of socio-economic development and emancipation of the subaltern. Bayat adds that while Islamic movements aim to Islamise their society, political structures and economy, liberation theologians never intended to Christianise their society or nation-states, but rather aimed to change them from the vantage point of the deprived. As a result Islamic movements, in contrast to Liberation Theology, generally prioritise wider moral and political objectives (such as an Islamic state, law and dress codes) rather than helping the downthrodde. Within their worldview, issues such as social justice for the poor are subordinate to – and follow from – the establishment of an Islamic order (Bayat 2010:83).

Critical scholars also argue that essentialist assumptions about Islam and the prioritisation of religious identity lead Islamic movements to downplay the desirability or salience of other social struggles. Political activist Toscano (1995:28) for example argues that Islamic discourse promotes a supposed natural brotherhood between Muslims that should prevent the struggle between believers of different classes. The solution to poverty is to be found in a return to Islamic values and tradition, or in the words of the Tunisian Islamic leader Rached Ghannouchi: "we need to emphasize that poverty, in the eyes of Islam, is linked to unbelief" (1979 cited in Toscano 1995:28). Likewise, Mustapha Sibai, founder of the MB in Syria, noted that: "the socialism of Islam leads necessarily to the solidarity of various social categories and not to the war between classes as communism" (1959 cited in Carré and Gérard 1983:87). As such, Islamic parties seek to re-establish the *Ummah*, a religio-political entity that would gather all Muslims and transcend the cleavages that divide them today (Toscano 1995:24).

Another common feature in the work of these scholars is a concern with

understanding the orientation of Islamic movements towards particular class forces.¹⁸ Gilbert Achcar (1981:3) has argued that much of the social base of Islamic movements is the petit bourgeoisie, particularly those groups of society that come from rural origins and were urbanised under the impact of the economic changes of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as recently educated youth who were hard hit by the collapse of Nasserism and the Arab nationalist and left movements. Along side this layer, squeezed by capitalist transition, the leadership of Islamic organisations is frequently drawn from professional layers such as doctors, engineers and lawyers, as well as new business groups that emerged with the liberalisation processes of the 1980s and 1990s (Achcar 2013a:147). Achcar (2013a:147) explains that the Egyptian MB alongside other Arab branches of the Islamic movement had privileged access to business and employment opportunities in the Saudi Kingdom and other Gulf monarchies during the 1970s and 1980s at a time of a full oil boom. This situation boosted and accelerated the process of embourgeoisement of the Islamic movement, which experienced a major social transformation, with more and more capitalists now playing an increasing role inside the movement. According to Shater, an important figure of the Egyptian MB and a successful businessman, the Egyptian secret services had identified around 900 companies belonging to members of the Islamic movement (cited in Achcar 2013a:147).

In the case of Hezbollah, the Lebanese scholar Fawaz Traboulsi (2014:48) has recently argued that a major base of the party's social support rests upon Shi'a businesspeople who profited from the Civil War or commercial activities in the diaspora, as well as upper middle classes linked to new education and migration opportunities. The tension that results from these different social forces means that Islamic movements tend to profess a rhetorical concern for social justice aspirations (to be largely fulfilled through charitable means), whilst on the other hand, defending market-led principles and economic liberalisation. As the Tunisian Islamic leader Rached Ghannouchi noted in 1992: "we (the Islamic political movements) are the guarantor of a particular social order and of a liberal economic regime" (1992 cited in Toscane 1995:95). Ghannouchi has also declared that "foreign investment is welcome in Tunisia, companies must make profits and unions have sometimes been

¹⁸ At a more general level, this attempt to examine the class basis of political parties has been applied to other political parties in the Arab world (see Waterbury 1970; Batatu 1978; Achcar 1981; Favier 2004).

excessive in their demands, including the General Union of Tunisian Workers (known as the UGTT)” (cited in Sereni 2014). Indeed, Ghannouchi has accused the UGTT of being a heritage of the French colonial period and of not being a natural institution of Muslim society (cited in Sereni 2014).

On a similar note, the MB in Egypt also supports neoliberal policies and their economic programme has been criticized for favouring big businesses. Their economic programme is considered to be no different than under Mubarak’s regime.¹⁹ Hassan Malek, a businessman and ranking MB figure, actually went so far as to say in 2012 that the principles guiding economic policies followed under Mubarak were sound and on the right track, but corruption and nepotism marred their implementation (Reuters 2011).

The scholar Patrick Haenni (2005:65) has written that Islamic political movements have witnessed an increasing “embourgeoisement” in the process of Islamization of society in different countries, especially among its leadership and cadres. He speaks of an “Islam de Marché” (Islam of the Market) that is sympathetic to neoliberal policies while combining it with moral conservatism. He describes that this “Islam de Marché” was promoted by the rising and newly pious bourgeoisie from the beginning of the 1980s. He cites first the “Anatolian Tigers”, who benefited from the export support policies of the 1980s, restoring at the same time Islam and Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) at the expense of the secular elites at the head of large conglomerates in Istanbul and Ankara. A second example is the Egyptians’ “Infatihin”, who benefited from the policies of Sadat favouring the private sector and opening up the economy while rehabilitating Islamism in the social and political scene. The immigration of some sectors of Egyptians to the Gulf monarchies also combined this process of economic enrichment with increased religiosity (Haenni 2005:65-66).

¹⁹ Khaled Ali, an Egyptian activist and lawyer, said that Muhammad Morsi’s economic platform is identical to that of Ahmed Ezz, referring to the businessman and former leader of the National Democratic Party, which was the ruling party under Mubarak’s regime. Ali added that the MB’s platform would not achieve the revolution’s goals of social justice and a just distribution of wealth. Another activist, Khaled Youssef, who had participated in Hamdeen Sabahi’s campaign, described the MB’s project as a plan prepared by businessmen for business interests, referring to Deputy Chairman of the MB, Khairat Al-Shater, as well as prominent Brotherhood figure, Hassan Malek (Abdel Hafeez 2012).

The predominance of upper and middle class forces in the leadership of these movements has shaped their orientation towards political action and the character of their institutions. Asef Bayat (2010:83) argues that Islamic movements – in contrast to Liberation Theology that largely mobilised the poor – tend to target educated middle classes, which they view as the main agents of political change. This view is shared by Clark (2004:37), who argues that NGOs and organisations of the Islamic movements provide jobs, social networks and services to the middle class. Similarly, Achcar (2006:35) has criticized those authors who claim that the welfare institutions of Islamic organisations represent a progressive alternative to capitalist social relations or a form of counter society (a position most forcefully expressed in the Lebanese context by the sociologist Waddah Charara (2007:7-8). Achcar (2006:35) points out that the so-called ‘Hezbollah state’, while consisting of real institutions and social services, can also be found in other communities and thus reinforces the nature of sectarian clientelism in the country. Moreover, the services provided by these institutions are aimed solely at the Shi’a population, and for this reason do not represent any real attempt to replace existing capitalist society.²⁰

The focus on the class basis of Islamic movements raises complex questions around the relationship between religious sect and class in the Arab world. Given the prominent role of sectarianism in many Arab countries – including Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Bahrain – some scholars have argued that membership in a religious sect can be mapped onto class position. This identification of sect and class is perhaps best exemplified in the concept of ‘community class’, which was developed by two prominent intellectuals associated with the Organisation of Communist Action in

²⁰ Indeed, throughout the world, conservative religious movements have supported neoliberal policies while advocating increased charitable work, leading some scholars to talk of “a smooth alliance between neoliberals and religious fundamentalists”, which could be characterised as “religious neoliberalism” (Hackworth 2013:100). Confirming this trend, various religious conservative movements support the idea that Faith Based Organisations (FBO) could replace the state's public services because they are more efficient. The American religious leader Marvin Olasky, for example, argues that government-based welfare is an abject failure because it is wasteful and does not emphasize personal responsibility. Therefore, he argues, welfare states should be dismantled and replaced with locally based religious systems that are funded by biblical tithes. He adds: “such programmes would not burden the federal government and would be able to sort the ‘deserving’ from the ‘undeserving’ poor” (Hackworth 2013:104-105). Olasky’s political views have wide influence in the US Republican party; he was a close advisor to former President George W. Bush in the 1990s. Based on this idea of less state and more independent FBOs, Olasky promoted the idea of “compassionate conservatism” (Hackworth 2013:105). In the Middle East context, Islamic fundamentalist movements have also adopted this form of “compassionate conservatism”, combining neoliberal policies and conservative moralism (Haenni 2005:104; Roy 2002:150-152). The Egyptian MB, for example, has supported increased religious compliance and the work of charity organisations (Freedom and Justice Party 2011:9), while also advocating neoliberal policies in which the private sector would play a leading role in the economy (Freedom and Justice Party 2011:26).

Lebanon (OCAL), Mohsen Ibrahim and Fawaz Traboulsi.²¹ The concept soon expanded from its origins among a small circle of left intellectuals to become one that was widely held among key left organisations in Lebanon – notably the LCP and the progressive front, the Lebanese National Movement (LNM).

According to this theory, the predominant weight of Christians in Lebanon's business elite meant that Christians could be understood as constituting the bourgeoisie, while Muslims (particularly Shi'a) made up the vast majority of the working class and poor. Shi'a, according to Ghassan Tueni, editor of the liberal Nahar Newspaper: "are the proletarians of the land, the most submissive class in appearance and the most revolutionary at the bottom. The revolt of the Shi'a masses can become a revolt in the name of all communities" (cited in Picard 1985:1005). From this perspective, the struggle of a particular sect – in this case the Shi'a – represented a form of class struggle. In Fawaz Traboulsi's words, the left needed "to confront the religion of the rulers with the religion of the governed, the religion of the satiated with the religion of the hungry" (1988 cited in Daou 2013).

Clearly the concept of community class bears some affinity to the 'anti-imperialist' perspective outlined earlier. Indeed, in the Lebanese context, some intellectuals associated with the LCP were to make this analogy explicit. They argued that groups such as Hezbollah were important allies of the left because they represented the struggle of the Shi'a population as an exploited underclass. Karim Mroue, a prominent leftist intellectual and leader of the LCP, argued that closer relations and collaboration by the left with religious organisations would push the latter to more progressive politics. Mroue saw a potential of convergence between what he called the "tributaries of the revolutionary movement" (i.e. the left) and anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist religious organisations (1990 cited in Ismael J. S. and Ismael T. 1998:134). Drawing a comparison with Liberation Theology, Mroue wrote that: "we have to consider that if the revolutionary Islamic movements are the most salient in our countries, then we have to exert more efforts for the sake of producing the effect that Liberation Theology has had in Latin America" (cited in Ismael J. S. and Ismael

²¹ Personalities such as Nahla Chahal and Fawaz Traboulsi were part of the OCAL and supported as well this vision of the concept of community class at the time (For Fawaz Traboulsi see article Daou 2013).

T. 1998:137).

Nonetheless, positions such as these were to be contested within the LCP and the wider Lebanese left. George Hawi, another historic leader of the LCP, stated that the party faced a four-pronged struggle: the struggle against Israeli occupation, against the President of the Republic, against extremists and against mounting Islamic and Christian sectarianisms (cited in Ismael J. S. and Ismael T. 1998:121). The LCP also condemned calls by Islamic parties for the establishment of an Islamic republic, which came in reaction to right-wing demands for a Christian republic. The LCP stated that both projects were:

“ultimately serving the objectives of the US-Israeli alliance, not only because they now help to fuel strife and discord, but also because these slogans impel the establishment on our soil of several entities on the denominational principle, and provoke divisions in other Arab countries, thereby providing justification for the establishment of the state of Israel on a religious basis.”
(1987 cited in Ismael J. S. and Ismael T. 1998:126)

One of the most vocal critics of the concept of “community class” was the LCP intellectual, Mehdi Amel. Amel had been a student of the French philosopher Louis Althusser, and provided a strikingly original analysis of the phenomenon of sectarianism in the Arab world and the relationship between sect and class.²² Amel’s (1986:248) approach to sectarianism emphasized its contemporary role in facilitating patterns of class power within the colonially-dominated societies of the Arab world. In this sense, he argued against what he described as ‘historicist’ perspectives that characterised sectarianism as a primordial remainder of earlier periods of history, which would disappear through processes of modernisation. Instead, in Amel’s view, sectarianism needed to be seen as constitutive, and reinforcing, of current forms of state and class power. The Lebanese bourgeoisie sought to give a confessional

²² Some key texts of Mehdi Amel are *Muqadimât nazariyya li-dirassa âthar al-fikr al-ishtirâkî fî haraka al-tahrîr al-watânî*; *Âzma al-hadâra al-‘arabiyya am âzma al-burjwâziyyât al-‘arabiyya?*; *Al-nazariyya fî al-mumârissa al-siyyâssiyya: bahth fî âsbâb al-harb al-âhliyya al-lubnâniyya*; *Moudakhal ila naqd al-fikr al-tâ’ifi: al-qadiyya al-falastîniyya fî idîulujiyya al-burjwâziyya al-lubnâniyya*; *Mârks fî istishrâq idwârd sa’id: hal al-‘aql lil-gharb wa al-qalb lil-sharq?*

aspect to the class struggle in order to strengthen its own position (Amel 1986:212). In this sense, Lebanon's confessional system arose alongside the development of Lebanese capitalism (in interaction with colonial rule), and thus sectarianism was something that needed to be opposed as a necessary feature of the struggle against class rule itself.

Echoing Amel, the Palestinian Lebanese scholar Ussama Makdissi (2000:2-7) has also explained how sectarianism was a modern product that had its origins in the mid 19th century. Makdissi (2000:2-7) explains well how sectarianism was constructed in the context of European domination and Ottoman reforms and because its producers at the colonial (Europe), imperial (Ottoman) and local (Lebanese) echelons considered themselves as moderns who used the historic past to justify contemporary demands and future development.

From this standpoint, Mehdi Amel argued against any attempt to ascribe and equate class position according to membership in a particular sect, and as a result, to then build alliances on the basis of sectarian affiliation. Such alliances would, according to Amel, further entrench the sectarian dynamic inherent to the system and thus strengthen the position of those in power. At a theoretical level, the community class concept was mistaken, in Amel's (1986:242) belief, because it resulted from an amalgam of the political (the sectarian system) and the economic (the social relations underlying capitalist society). Instead, Amel advanced a position that highlighted the contradictory class nature of different sect communities, one in which the role of sectarianism helped to obscure relations of power and domination within the community itself.

Regardless of these contested positions, the LCP and LNM slowly moved towards advocating closer collaboration with Islamic parties. This political trajectory occurred despite increasing attacks on the left by Islamic militias – including the assassination of both Hussein Mroue and Mehdi Amel in 1987, widely believed to have been committed by Islamic groups close to Hezbollah (Nassif-Debs 2006). One of the consequences of the growing alliance between the left and the Islamic political parties in Lebanon was a downplaying of the demand for an end to the sectarian

system and a shift in the discourse of the LNM – away from an emphasis on the struggle between right and left towards one that viewed the conflict as a struggle between conservative Christian forces on one side and progressive and Islamic forces on the other side (Picard 1985; Chiit 2009; Daou 2013). Small numbers of the left – particularly the OCAL – even joined Hezbollah, in the belief that the party represented the struggle of the poor in Lebanon (Dot Pouillard 2008). This trajectory, as Amel predicted, deepened the sectarian character of the Civil War itself, which was to have profound implications on the development of Hezbollah (see Chapter 2 for further discussion).²³

1.5 Theoretical Framework of this Thesis

This thesis develops an analysis of Hezbollah on the basis of the method offered in the third set of critical literature. In doing so, there are two key theoretical aspects that will be emphasized. First, in line with the observations made by Amel, Achcar, Al-Azm and Azmeh, the thesis will focus in detail on the social and political consequences of Hezbollah's religious ideology, particularly the party's claim that the deep-rooted problems facing society can be best addressed through a return to an Islamic 'way of life' supposedly grounded in an earlier period of history. Unlike the perspectives of the anti-imperialist or pragmatic party approaches, it is necessary to take seriously the impact of Hezbollah's particular concept of religion in its politics – not sidelining it by focusing solely on the military aspects of Hezbollah's practice against Israel or minimising the role played by this religious ideology in the party's growing political conformity. It is noteworthy that Hezbollah itself emphasizes this culturalist/religious element as the single most essential feature of its ideology, with its vision of Islam said to be "the overall, total and appropriate route for a better life ... representing the ideological, doctrinaire and practical basis on which the movement is founded" (Qassem 2008:32-33). All aspects of the party's practice – including the armed struggle against Israel – flow from this perspective (Fadllallah 1994).

Following an approach based on Marxist class analysis relying on historical and

²³ The historical accounts of leftist leaders Mohsen Ibrahim (*al-Harb wa-Tajriba al-Haraka al-Wataniyya al-Lubnaniyya*, Beirut: Beirut al-Mazaa, 1983) and George Hawi (*al-Tariq* December 1982), both recognise this phenomena of increasing sectarianism in the ranks of the LNM.

sociological data, the thesis will analyse the form and content of Hezbollah's religious worldview and the implications of this for how the party relates to the Shi'a population. Specifically, it will show that the party's particular religious conception has been a key element in its ability to win hegemony over Shi'a society. The concept of hegemony is understood here in the Gramscian sense as, "the whole range of values, attitudes, beliefs, cultural norms, legal precepts that are deeply embedded in the fabric of social relations" (Thomas 2009:210). According to Gramsci, these elements are a vital part of any group's ability to become dominant. Hegemony is established not simply through force but through, "the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally" (cited in Roccu 2012:44). Although this counter-balance is a unity, it is also – as Thomas notes – "a precise, unbalanced equilibrium... force must not appear to predominate too much over consent, but the proper relationship in reality involves more weight on the side of the former" (Thomas 2009:165). Through this unity, hegemony becomes a "form of political power exercised over those classes in close proximity to the leading group, while domination is exerted over those opposing it. Consent is one of the means of forging the composite body of a class alliance, while coercion is developed against the excluded other" (Thomas 2009:163).

Lisa Wedeen, in her research on the propaganda of the Assad regime in producing power and hegemony, acknowledges the Gramscian concept of hegemony employed by some social science theorists. She points to the significance of "ideas, signs and images in producing dominant understandings that are taken for granted and perceived as natural and commonsensical" (Wedeen 1999: 11). This understanding of hegemony, in her opinion, although helpful in proposing ways in which images and ideas are involved in producing power, nonetheless fails to apprehend the dynamics of official rhetoric in Syria regarding the regime of Hafez Al Assad. She argues that

"the practices and language of the cult do cultivate Asad's power in ways that are "taken for granted. In other words, while the literal statements of the cult are frequently clearly preposterous, the dominance to which they refer (and which

they also help to produce) is implicit in the regime's demands of public dissimulation and in people's conformity to them". (Weden 1999:12)

Her research provides what Louis Althusser and others would probably call a materialist approach to rhetoric and symbols. She explains that it "focuses on the observable, material effects of the cult and on the everyday practices of domination and transgression the cult produces through its system of representation" (Weden 1999:12). In much the same way, Althusser and Stuart Hall argued that there "is a dialectal relationship between practices and ideology in which practices produce ideological representations, and ideology material because it is inscribed in practices" (cited in Weden 1999:12).

Anne Showstack Sasson (2000) presents Gramsci's concept of hegemony as indicating consent and moral and intellectual leadership. She adds that hegemony has cultural, political and economic aspects and entails compromises between social groups in which sectional interests are transformed and a notion of the general interest is promoted (Sasson 2000:45). She explains that Gramsci developed the concept of hegemony in recognition of the changing nature of political power in the twentieth century and the political significance of civil society. The attributes of civil society, Sasson argues, were an indicator of the democratic nature of a society, in which if its democratic and pluralistic potential were developed, coercive aspects of the state could diminish (Sasson 2000:103). In this perspective, she also put a lot of emphasis on the role of leaders and intellectuals in elaborating a new historic project, a new hegemony. She says that the process of achieving a new hegemony:

" will be facilitated by the development of new groups of organic intellectuals, including from social strata whose intellectual capacities have not traditionally developed, and a new conception of the world. Yet the goal of making 'politically possible the intellectual progress of the mass and not only of small intellectual groups requires both a criticism of common sense and of traditional philosophy. This is the precondition for

a new hegemony (Sasson 2000:34).

In her opinion, the meaning of critical self-consciousness, historically and politically, is the creation of an élite of intellectuals.

The ability to win hegemony does not simply apply to those who dominate any society, but is an important element for any group that aspires to hold that position. In the case of Hezbollah, it will be demonstrated that its hegemony over the Shi'a population is highly contradictory because of the different (and evolving) social interests that the party attempts to encompass. Because Hezbollah's hegemony acts to obscure and mystify the underlying exploitation inherent to Lebanese sectarian capitalism, it is a "form of hegemony designed to give rise to manipulated consent, a consent of subaltern allies" (Thomas 2009:227). It works, in Thomas' apt phrase, to maintain "the subaltern classes in their subaltern position, glossing over or obscuring the true, fractured nature of the present by speculatively sanctifying it as the only possible present and this as eternity" (Thomas 2009:291). As will be shown for Hezbollah, it is through portraying the self-interests of the dominated as identical with the actions and norms of the party that the latter has been able to win leadership within the Shi'a population.

The concept of articulation, regarding the linkages between the modes of production, modes of coercion and modes of persuasion, in which power manifests itself structurally, as explained by Nazih Ayubi, is also useful to understand Hezbollah's hegemony. He argues that Islamist discourse is essentially anti state, and "often manages to *interpellate* (i.e to "call", entreat or persuade by pleading) different, or even contradictory, classes and forces (the proletarianised intelligentsia and the prosperous traditional and/ or new merchants), which may eventually form a *power bloc* united in its opposition to the state: to its managerial failure and cultural alterity" (Ayubi 1995: 28). He says that the concept of interpellation (which has Gramscian and Althusserian antecedents) denotes the articulated discursive process, which has been built in such a way that it literally appeals to people from various social classes and groups who all believe that they are being addressed or called by it. He adds that "it is therefore an ideological mechanism through which subjects are endowed with

specific identities, interests and social positions. It is usually involved in the construction of “historic blocs” and in most populist discourses” (Ayubi 1995: 29). He ends by saying that religious discourses, as well as nationalist, have a strong “interpellatory” potential because they illustrate cases whereby the same symbolic code can attract disparate social constituencies (Ayubi 1995: 29).

Hezbollah’s hegemony is actually underpinned by its religious worldview, which as later chapters will demonstrate, articulates a particular set of collective and individual behavioural norms that are encapsulated in the terms *hâla islâmiyya* and *iltizâm*. These behavioural norms constitute the core of Hezbollah’s discourse and are firmly based upon the notion of a ‘return to Islam’ as the solution to the problems that beset the Shi’a population. Most significantly, they act to encourage deep social conformity (although not, it should be emphasized, any kind of social passivity) and submission to the leadership of the party itself as the institutional vehicle of religious salvation. They work through both consensual and coercive means; there are numerous rewards (both material and moral) for those who comply with these norms, while their rejection brings social ostracism and in some cases violence. These norms are dispersed and reinforced through what Gramsci described as the party’s ‘hegemonic apparatus’, the network of organisations and services within civil society including: educational facilities, professional syndicates, the media, religious establishments and cultural institutions (Thomas 2009:291). In this sense, Hezbollah’s religious foundation is not simply a set of beliefs but an *ideology* that reproduces a conception of the world which prescribes how Muslims should think and act, and which is consciously diffused through various socialisation structures (Kandil 2011:46).

We will also see that Hezbollah, with its large network of institutions and its own military force, (legitimized by the Ta’if Agreement and the Lebanese state until today), possesses in many aspects the characteristics of a state as defined by Marxists. Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci explained that the state is “ the entire complex practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules (cited in Ayubi 1995:5). Gramsci developed an analysis incorporating the apparatus of hegemony in the state, in other words understanding

that “the general notion of the state includes elements which need to be referred back to the notion of civil society (in the sense that one might say that state = political society + civil society; in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion) (cited in Ayubi 1995:6). The Italian Marxist explains that the governing class did not have to rely exclusively on the coercive power of the state or even its direct economic power to rule, but rather through its hegemony, expressed in the civil society and the state, in which the ruled are convinced and persuaded to take the system of beliefs of the ruling class and to share its social, cultural and moral values (cited in Ayubi 1995:6). The Gramscian concept of hegemony, in addition to analysing the processes according to which political structures are approved by the system’s agents, explores as well the area of cultural and ideological consent, and underlines the role of the state as educator.

In his understanding of the state, Gramsci observed that various levels of development of the state existed. He described for example the “gendarme state” (based on its law and order functions) and the “corporative state” (based on its economic interests and functions) as a primary and narrow phase of state formation and development. In the absence of the development of civil society, the state remains in Gramsci’s terms backwards, in other words mainly coercive and relying on force, while enjoying at best a highly limited hegemony over society (Sasson 2000:72). On the opposite, what he called the “integral state” or the “state in its totality” was not limited to the government, but incorporated some aspects of the civil society and is based on hegemony and leadership (cited in Ayubi 1995:7). The transition to an integral state involves the development of hegemony throughout society, in other words, as explained by Gramsci “relationships at all levels of the society, from the factory through to the school, that aim at the creation of a new type and level of civilization” (cited in Ayubi 1995:8). The integral state with a leading or directive class creates a particular “Weltanschauung” (worldview). Hegemony is then realized when this particular “Weltanschauung” is “diffused by agencies of ideological control and socialisation into every area of daily life to the extent that this prevailing consciousness is internalised by the broad masses to become part of the common sense” (Boggs 1976 cited in Ayubi 1995:8). This is generally carried out through a dialectical interaction between the structure and the superstructure, between the objective and the subjective, manifested in the creation of a socio-political bloc, or, as

Gramsci calls it, a historical bloc. (Ayubi 1995:8).

We will see that Hezbollah's hegemony represents a coalition led by a particular fraction of the Lebanese Shi'a petit bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie linked to the Islamic Republic of Iran and dominating the Lebanese Shi'a popular classes, and tries to impose a particular world view on the Lebanese Shi'a population through both hegemony and armed coercion.

To analyse the development of Hezbollah's hegemony on the Lebanese Shi'a population, French Marxist Louis Althusser's analysis of the State is very helpful (1976). Althusser describes the state as a 'machine' of repression and the instrument that allows the ruling classes to ensure their domination over the working class, but notably explains that to ensure the domination of the ruling classes the state has two main sets of institutions: the (repressive) State Apparatus (SA) and the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). According to Althusser (1976), the SA includes: the government, the administration, the army, police, courts, prisons, etc. The ISA appears for observers on the other hand as distinct and specialised institutions and encompass various sectors of society, which are not necessarily directly under the authority of the state: religious institutions, educational institutions, the family, laws, the political (the political system, including the different political parties), trade unions, the media (press, radio, TV, etc.), cultural institutions (literature, fine arts, sports, etc.). Institutions of ISA, for its majority do not have public status, and are private institutions. Gramsci nevertheless warned that the distinction between public and private is a distinction internal to bourgeois law, and valid in (subordinate) domains in which bourgeois law exercises its 'powers' (cited in Althusser 1976). The state domain escapes to the bourgeois law because it is "beyond the law", argued Althusser (1976) and he adds that the state which is the state of the ruling class, is neither public nor private, it is rather the condition of any distinction between public and private. Althusser explains that whether the institutions that perform them are "public" or "private", what matters is how they work. Private institutions can perfectly well 'function' as Ideological State Apparatus (Althusser 1976).

What distinguishes the ISA from the (repressive) SA is that the first operates

overwhelmingly through ideology, while operating secondarily on repression. On the contrary, the (repressive) SA operates through repression (including physical), while functioning secondarily on ideology. In the same time, there are no purely repressive or ideological apparatuses. For example the army and the police, which are based on repression and are part of the SA, also run on ideology, both for their own cohesion and reproduction, and through the "values" they offer to the outside (Althusser 1976). Mehdi Amel, a student of Althusser, developed this understanding in the Arab world as the state being owned and used by the dominant class to submit the socio-economic development to its class domination or to maintain this development in the framework of relations of production that is determined by the ruling class (Amel 1973:57). He adds that the State apparatus is the basic and fundamental political and ideological tool of the ruling class, and that it is a class repressive apparatus to protect the domination of the dominant class (Amel 1973: 59). Althusser (1976) actually argued that no class can permanently hold state power without exercising the same time its hegemony over and in the Ideological State Apparatus. This is why the ISA is not simply a place of challenge, but also of the class struggle. The class (or class coalition) in power does not easily impose its law in the ISA as in the SA, not only because the old ruling classes can conserve for long periods strong positions, but also because the resistance of the exploited classes can find the means and the opportunity to express themselves, either by using the contradictions that exist there, either by conquering them by the struggle of combat positions (Althusser 1976). Chapter 5 (on the institutions linked to Hezbollah) and chapter 7 (on the military institution of the Islamic movement) demonstrate that Hezbollah shares many of these features presented by Althusser, despite not being formally a state.

The second theoretical aspect of the critical literature that is emphasized in this thesis is the importance of tracing the changing class characteristics of the Shi'a population, and the relationship of this to Hezbollah's political practice. Class is here understood as a set of social relations that emerge around capital accumulation and forms of labor. In doing so however, as argued by Adam Hanieh:

“we need to avoid an abstract and economistic understanding of

what we mean by class... What this means is that questions such as gender, age, national and ethnic origin, citizenship status, and so forth, are part of what constitutes class as a concrete social relation. In this sense, class is not an abstract category shorn of particularity and difference – difference is essential to how we understand it” (Hanieh 2015).

As David McNally has pointed out, drawing upon the observations of the Canadian theorist Himani Bannerji, we need to avoid an approach that sees “different forms of social oppression as discrete and autonomous social relations ... rather than as ‘social relations and forms [that] come into being in and through each other’” (McNally 2015, 143 cited in Hanieh 2015).

In this regard, Chapter 2, 3 and 4 examine the political economy of development of Lebanon over recent decades, in order to reveal how the position of different sectarian communities has changed in relation to economic reproduction. The critical literature surveyed above emphasizes this methodological approach, but it is noteworthy that much of this writing was produced in the 1970s and 1980s, and thus does not generally consider the significant changes that have ensued through the most recent period. In this sense, the thesis aims to update the existing literature in line with the most recent development of Lebanon’s political economy.

As Goodwin and Hetland (2013:90) have argued at a general level, tracing patterns of capitalist development is important to an appreciation of party and social movement dynamics in at least four specific ways. First, changing patterns of capitalist reproduction act to “inhibit or facilitate the formation of new collective identities and solidarities, including both class and non-class identities. In this way capitalism shapes the very condition of existence of many social movements” (Goodwin and Hetland 2013:91). Second, the relative balance of power that exists between different classes “shapes the way movements evolve over time and what they can win for their constituents” (Goodwin and Hetland 2013:91). Third, within movements themselves, class divisions “may powerfully shape movement goals and strategies” (Goodwin and Hetland 2013:91). And finally, the kinds of goals and

strategies developed by movements, and their ideological expressions, are “closely linked to capitalist institutions and practices” (Goodwin and Hetland 2013:91).²⁴

Each of these four observations will be noted throughout this thesis. In particular, the analysis in the following chapters will focus on these dynamics throughout the period of neoliberal reform in Lebanon (1990s to the current day).

We understand neoliberalism as a particular organisation of capitalism to ensure the conditions for capitalist reproduction at a global scale and as part of a ruling class offensive, which ran through the recessions in the 1970s and 1980s and resulted in restructuring and generated a new wave of capitalist expansion.²⁵ The basic goal of neoliberalism, as David Harvey has emphasized, is the development of a new “regime of capital accumulation characterised by a minimal direct intervention of the state in the economy, limited to setting up the legal, political and military functions required to guarantee the proper functioning of markets and their creation in those sectors where markets do not exist” (cited in Roccu 2012:72). In the framework of neo liberalism, the State has actually the explicit role of guaranteeing capital accumulation as explained and emphasized by David Harvey: “The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up those military, defence, police, and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets. Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary” (Harvey 2005: 2).

At a general level, Lebanese neoliberalism – understood as a set of both economic policies and a restructuring of class power – differs little from elsewhere in the region (Hanieh 2013:160). In this sense, successive Lebanese governments have

²⁴ Goodwin and Hetland’s approach provides a useful counterpoint to analyses of party politics and social movements that deny the salience of capitalist development itself. As Goodwin and Hetland have noted in their critique of New Social Movement theory and ‘contentious politics’, while much social science writing on social movements “provide valuable insights into the internal dynamics of social movements”, they “nevertheless tend to undermine the reality of capitalism, proletarianisation, class conflict, or political economy generally” (Goodwin and Hetland 2013:91). (For further discussion of these themes, see Barker, Cox, Krinsky and Nilsen 2013)

²⁵ <http://isj.org.uk/take-neoliberalism-seriously/>

embraced policies such as privatisation, opening up of markets, deregulation of labour and other markets and cuts in social spending.

At a more specific level, however, subsequent chapters will demonstrate several distinctive characteristics of Lebanon's process of neoliberal reform. Most notably, Lebanese neoliberalism is distinguished by its focus on urban-led restructuring and financialisation of the economy linked to foreign capital inflows. These characteristics have their roots in the earlier development of Lebanon as an intermediary hub between the Arab world and Europe, as well as the ways in which the devastation due to decades of war and civil strife shaped neoliberal policy-making. The specificity of Lebanese neoliberalism has had a profound impact on the position and character of the Shi'a population, and cast a particular character on the four dynamics noted by Goodwin and Hetland.

Any study of the Lebanese case requires addressing the question of the nature of sectarianism, and the contending approaches to the 'community class' concept noted above. In this regard, the thesis will utilise many of the earlier insights of Mehdi Amel, and attempt to assess these insights in light of the developments following Amel's untimely death. Most notably, the thesis draws upon Amel's observation that sectarian patterns of political mobilisation reflect the manner in which fractions of the bourgeoisie act to impose themselves as representatives of the popular classes (Amel 1986:125). Sectarianism is a powerful mechanism of control over the course of the class struggle through its creation of ties of dependence between the popular classes and their bourgeois leadership. In this manner, popular classes are deprived of an independent political existence and instead are defined (and act politically) through their confessional status.

This analysis of sectarianism provides a useful theoretical bridge between both the religious character of Hezbollah's ideology – notably its role in strengthening the hegemony of the party over the Shi'a population – and the changing class characteristics of the Shi'a population itself. If Hezbollah's politics are understood as increasingly oriented towards the bourgeois class fraction of the Shi'a – itself an outgrowth of the patterns of neoliberal reform analysed in subsequent chapters –

then sectarianism represents one of the means by which this class fraction entrenches its hegemony over Shi'a population.

These processes, however, do not develop without contradiction or tension. Later chapters will note many of these contradictions at different levels. They include: the ways in which Hezbollah conceives of its economic programme as a 'social market' economy, the party's policies in the areas over which it exerts significant control (particularly the southern suburbs of Beirut and the Bekaa Valley) and, as Chapter 6 will discuss in some detail, the tension between the organisation's presence in government and the emergence of non-confessional labour struggles throughout the country over the last decade. Revealing these contradictions is an important goal of this thesis – they point to the importance of moving beyond any timeless or essentialist characterisations of Hezbollah itself.

Chapter 2: Sectarianism and the Lebanese Political Economy: Hezbollah's Origins

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the origins and development of Hezbollah within the sectarian political system of Lebanon and the changing socio-economic position of the Shi'a population. The first part of the chapter traces the evolution of the Lebanese political economy from the period of the French Mandate through to independence in 1943. Throughout this period, Lebanon was dominated politically and economically by France, whose control rested upon the sponsorship of sectarian patterns of rule – notably its close alliance with the Maronite Christian sect. Within this system, the Shi'a population was the most marginalised of all groups in the country. Largely rural based, the Shi'a were politically controlled by the *zu'âma*.²⁶

These characteristics of the Shi'a population began to change following independence. The financial and service-oriented character of Lebanon's political economy was accentuated through 1960s and 1970s, with the country forming an intermediary position between the Arab world and Western states. While remaining marginalised, some segments of the Shi'a population saw an improvement in their relative position through increased opportunities in the state administration and growing access to education (particularly under the administration of President Fuad Chehab). A new and growing Shi'a bourgeoisie was appearing as well, especially from the return of wealthy Shi'a migrants (Nasr 1985).

At the same time, the penetration of market relations into rural areas, notably the introduction of export based agro-capitalism that replaced earlier economic bases with cash crops like tobacco (Deeb L. 2006:73), provoked large-scale migration – both internal (to Beirut) and on a regional and international level. During the 1950s and 1960s, emigration was increasingly oriented to the Arab oil-producing countries (especially Kuwait and Libya) and transformed many Lebanese Shi'a villages (Nasr

²⁶ *Zu'âma* were generally large landowners who acted as intermediaries to access services for the popular classes. See further details page 61.

1985). These trends altered the existing power relations of Shi'a society, undermining the position of the *zu'âma* and deepening the Shi'a's urban character. The Shi'a, therefore, came to form a large component of the poor and working classes concentrated in the massive slums of South Beirut. The social effects of emigration on the Shi'a community were considerable. Local power relations in the villages shifted dramatically, leading to the loss of influence by traditional notabilities and religious families in favour of wealthy returning migrants who constituted an emerging new Shi'a bourgeoisie. This new group purchased land and orchards, established new commercial networks and carved out their own spheres of social influence (Nasr 1985).

New political formations arose alongside these changes in Shi'a social structures, notably the "*Harakat al-Mahrumîn*" (Movement of the Dispossessed) – a movement led by Moussa Sadr that competed with some elements of the *zu'âma* but more particularly against the left, for political dominance within Shi'a areas. The Lebanese Civil War, which began in 1975, further reinforced these transformations within Shi'a social structures. The Civil War deepened the pre-existing sectarian divisions in the country, leading to a highly fractured state dominated by militias. Politically, the "*Harakat al-Mahrumîn*"'s position began to be undermined in the later years of the Civil War, as the organisation was increasingly viewed as unrepresentative of the needs of large sections of the Shi'a populations and unwilling to confront Israel's occupation of Beirut in 1982. The migration of a growing portion of the Shi'a population and the Iranian revolution of 1979, which brought Khomeini to power also played a role in the diminishing influence of the movement. In this context, Hezbollah was able to emerge as a principal voice of the Shi'a population in Lebanon.

This narrative helps to establish the relationship between Hezbollah and its social base in the Shi'a population. It confirms, in particular, the observations made by Mehdi Amel (1986:326), that sectarianism is an essential component of how the political power of the Lebanese bourgeoisie (of all religious identities) is maintained. Sectarianism enables the Lebanese bourgeoisie to intervene ideologically in the class struggle, strengthening its control of the popular classes and keeping them subordinated to their sectarian leaders. Religious sects in Lebanon are not essential

entities, but rather a political relationship determined by a specific historical form of the movement of class struggle in which the bourgeoisie wins through the political absence of its class opponent. The political relationship therefore becomes a relation of class dependency that links the popular classes to the bourgeoisie by a sectarian link (Amel 1986:326-327).

2.2 Lebanon's Early History

In September 1920, after the demise of the Ottoman Empire, the country of Greater Lebanon was established under the authority of the French Mandate. The territory of the new country included Mount Lebanon, which had gained a semi-autonomous status under Ottoman rule through the interferences of European foreign powers in 1860, and also the regions of the Bekaa Valley, *Jabal 'Amil* (South Lebanon), Akkar, Beirut, Saida and Tripoli. These latter regions had been, until 1918, part of the two Ottoman *wilâya* of Damascus and Beirut (Picaudou 1989:57).

At this time, Lebanon was composed of 17 religious groupings that each had particular geographical and social characteristics.²⁷ Christians, who composed 55 percent of the total population of the country in 1920, were mainly concentrated in Mount Lebanon (Picaudou 1989:57). The Christian population was divided into various sects, the main ones being Maronite, Greek Orthodox, and Greek Catholic.²⁸ Muslims – Sunni, Shi'a, Druze, and Ismaeli – were a majority in the new territories incorporated into Greater Lebanon: the Bekaa Valley, *Jabal 'Amil*, Akkar, Beirut, Saida and Tripoli. In these regions, Muslims formed a majority of 200,814 against 117,332 Christians (Picaudou 1989:57).²⁹

The French Mandate in Lebanon and Syria was a means of furthering France's political and economic interests in the Middle East (Khoury 1981:452; Makdissi

²⁷ Following the Ta'if Agreement (see below), the Alawite community was recognised on the political level as a sect in Lebanon, and thus Lebanon is now composed of 18 officially recognised religious communities.

²⁸ In Mount Lebanon, the breakdown between these different denominations was 156,000 Maronite, 40,689 Greek Orthodox and 16,468 Greek Catholic. Other Christian denominations are also present, such as Armenian Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Syriac Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Chaldean, Assyrian, Copt, and Protestant (Picaudou 1989:57).

²⁹ A small Jewish community also existed at that period and was an official recognized community by the Lebanese political system.

1996). Lebanon and Syria were controlled by two sets of French companies called “*Intérêts communs*” and “*Sociétés concessionnaires*”. These two companies had a monopoly over public services and controlled the main sectors of the economy. Lebanon’s role as an economic intermediary towards Syria was also confirmed during French occupation (Owen 1976:24), with Beirut continuing to represent the main port for the Syrian interior (Traboulsi 2007:91). Beirut’s role as a regional warehouse was strengthened by the Mandate’s policy of reserving the large Syrian market for Beirut merchants in exchange for higher tariff protection for agriculture and industry, which was more important to the Syrian hinterland economy (Gates 1989:14).

These projects consolidated the Christian bourgeoisie’s power linked to European capitalism and the tertiary sector – notably banking and finance (Gates 1989:16). The large landowners of the periphery, who constituted the local notabilities, also benefited from the French Mandate. Projects of agricultural development and government aid in the Akkar, the South and the Bekaa principally benefited the large landowners supported by French governors (Traboulsi 2007:92).

A principal mean through which France dominated the country was the encouragement of sectarian patterns of rule, particularly its strategic alliance with the Maronite population. Under French control, elections for a representative council took place in 1922 followed four years later by elections for the Chamber of Deputies. These two elections were conducted along sectarian lines and were boycotted by the country’s Sunni Muslim population who were generally opposed to the partition of Syria and the formation of Greater Lebanon.³⁰ Sunni Muslim leaders complained that 83 percent of the fiscal revenues came from territories with a Muslim majority, in which 380,000 people lived, while 80 percent of those revenues were spent in Mount Lebanon that held only 330,000 inhabitants (Traboulsi 2007:81). Furthermore, in the new Greater Lebanon under French rule, Maronite Christians from Mount Lebanon constituted a majority of state politicians and civil servants, as opposed to the previous *wilayat* of Beirut, which were mainly Sunni Muslims and Greek Orthodox

³⁰ The notables of the coastal cities (Beirut, Saida, Tripoli and Tyr) – mostly Greek Orthodox and Sunni Muslim – feared economic losses because their direct links to the Syrian hinterland had been severed by annexations to the new Greater Lebanon.

(Traboulsi 2007:93).

Within the uneven political economy dominated by French capitalism, the Maronite population played a principal intermediary role involving themselves in international import and foreign trade, finance, and the representation of European firms. For this reason, the announcement of the French Mandate was supported by the Maronite Patriarch Huwayk, and those sections of the Maronite population linked to (and dependent upon) French rule. Other smaller Christian denominations were less inclined to the Mandate, partly because they were more closely linked to regional trade networks – especially trade between Beirut and Damascus.³¹

Muslim populations, particularly the Sunni community, were on the whole opposed to the French Mandate (Firro 2003:67). In addition to their marginalisation within the political structures established by the French, Sunni notables feared threats to their position within intra-regional trading networks including trade between the different ports of the Ottoman Empire, the export of agricultural products from the Syrian interior and the local trade in grain (Issawi 1982:58). For these reasons, Sunni elites tended to support the political and territorial unity of Syria.

Throughout the 1930s, however, differences between the Sunni and Maronite elites began to narrow in favour of independence for both Lebanon and Syria (as two separate countries), albeit with strong political and economic links.³² Some Muslim leaders, notably Riyad Al-Solh from Saida, argued for an alliance with Christian-led political forces that were supportive of the separation of Lebanon and Syria (while remaining opposed to the French Mandate).³³ Initially this position was not widely

³¹ The Christian population of Zahle, for example, which had a largely Greek Catholic population, voted in favour of remaining to Syria and against the French Mandate. The establishment of two separate countries could threaten Zahle's intermediate role as a freight hub in the trade between Beirut and Damascus from which it benefited immensely. The city was also a regional agricultural centre, providing both Beirut and some regions of Syria with a plentiful supply of food (Issawi 1982:58).

³² The political parties representing this trend were the Constitutionalist Bloc led by Bechara Al-Khuri, a Maronite notable, and composed as well of many Muslim notables, and the Republican Party created by Riyad Al-Solh, a Sunni notable, his cousins, and Aziz Al-Hashim, a Maronite notable from Aqra in the region of Jbeil (Traboulsi 2007:99).

³³ We can see this evolution in the Congress of the Coast of 1936 of Muslim Unionists, who reiterated the resolution of the previous Coastal Conference of 1933 that had rejected the separation of Greater Lebanon from Syria. A divergence among the participants regarding the unification of Lebanon with Syria appeared. Sunni leaders, such as Kazim Al-Solh and Shafiq Lutfi, refused to sign the resolution reached at the conference. Kazim Al-Solh actually considered the issue of unity with Syria as being of secondary importance if an independent

supported within the Sunni population and led to a distancing between Solh and the dominant Muslim pro-union factions. Nevertheless, this opposition did not last, especially following the signing of the Franco-Syrian treaty in 1936 in which the Syrian representatives of the National Bloc dropped their annexionist demands concerning Lebanon in return for France's integration of the Druze and Alawite autonomous zones into the Syrian Republic (Traboulsi 2007:101).

In addition to this, opposition to the French Mandate and harsh social and economic conditions spread throughout Lebanon. The bourgeoisie from across sectarian tendencies increasingly opted for the independence option and supported the various workers and popular strikes and protests challenging the rule of the French Mandate. The opposition of the bourgeoisie targeted the economic privileges of the Mandate, as demonstrated by the monopolies exercised on behalf of the French concessionary companies, their fiscal exemptions and the export of their profit to France (Traboulsi 2007:105). Even the Maronite church, a traditional ally and supporter of the French in the country, joined the opposition to the French Mandate for reasons very close to those of the bourgeoisie (Traboulsi 2007:105).

Independence was finally realised in 1943. The National Pact, an unwritten understanding made between Maronite and Sunni notables,³⁴ and the new Constitution of 1943, would become the founding principles of the newly independent Lebanon. Both documents confirmed political representation along sectarian lines and entrenched the domination of the Maronite community within the top echelons of the state. The President, according to Constitution, was required to be Maronite, and had extensive powers such as the right to appoint the Prime Minister, choose ministers, dismiss the Cabinet and veto legislation passed in parliament. Christian deputies also had a majority in the parliament in a 6:5 ratio to Muslims, while it was also agreed that key security positions (like the Army command and the Directorate of General Security) would be reserved for Christians (Salibi 1971:83; Faour 1991:631). The Sunni elite, however, was nevertheless promised greater

Lebanon would fully adopt Arabism as its national identity (Firro 2006:751). At the same time, some Muslim personalities advocated, since the mid 1920s, participating in the new state of Greater Lebanon. The first Sunni Muslim to show readiness to share in the management of affairs was Muhammad Al-Jisr, who since the 1920s was elected President of the Chamber of Deputies (Salibi 1971:81).

³⁴ The two most prominent being the aforementioned Bechara Al-Khuri and Riyad Al-Solh (see previous note).

participation in state affairs and decision-making, including the position of Prime Minister.

In contrast to their Maronite and Sunni counterparts, the political and socio-economic situation of the Shi'a population was significantly weaker at the time of independence. They had the lowest social indicators with illiteracy rates reaching 68.9 percent in 1943, compared to 31.5 percent in the Catholic Christian community (Nasr 1985). 85 percent of Shi'a were concentrated in two main regions: South Lebanon (with the exception of the coastal city of Saida, which was predominantly inhabited by Sunni) and North-Eastern Lebanon, particularly the Baalbek-Hermel region (Nasr 1985). The Shi'a population was also largely rural – a characteristic which in subsequent decades would change dramatically with very significant implications (see below). Indeed, urban-based Shi'a constituted no more than 10 percent of the whole community in 1948 (Nasr 1985).

The reason for this socio-economic situation of great sections of the Shi'a population was that they were located – as much as 85 percent – in the periphery of Lebanon. The vast majority of the Shi'a peasantry, which constituted the majority of the Shi'a population, lived on meagre plots with poor soil and very limited water resources. They practiced subsistence dry farming (primarily grains, olive trees and vineyards in the South, grains and some orchards in Baalbek). At the time of independence, Lebanon's periphery was characterized by large private properties owned by wealthy landowners. These properties accounted for three-fourths of the best land in the Shi'a countryside, and enabled the quasi-feudal exploitation of private sharecroppers (Nasr 1985). The Shi'a population had not yet experienced the social disruption, peasant revolts or rapid expansion of export farming that had already transformed the Maronite majority area of Mount Lebanon as it was integrated into the world capitalist economy.

Shi'a were also largely marginalised within the political system, despite the agreement (as part of the National Pact) that they would hold the position of Speaker in the National Assembly (Hazran 2010:533). They held the lowest level of political representation of all communities, with very few Shi'a holding a position of state

official before 1974 (Daher 2014:43). Empirical studies indicate that in 1946 only 3.2 percent of the highest civil service posts were held by Shi'a, increasing to just 3.6 percent by 1955, although Shi'a were 18 percent of the Lebanese population (Hazran 2010:533). In 1962, only three percent of class I posts in the state administration were held by Shi'a, who constituted 19.2 percent of the population at this period. In addition, similar figures were revealed for class II and III governmental posts in the late 1960s (Halawi 1992 cited in Hazran 2010:534).

Notabilities of important Shi'a families typically governed the Shi'a population during this period with political power monopolised by six "notable families": the As'ad, Zein and Osseiran in southern Lebanon, and the Hamadeh, Haydar and Husseini families in Baalbek and Byblos (Firro 2006:750-751; Nasr 1985). This elite was divided into quarrelling rival factions who often shifted alliances with the government in Beirut (Nasr 1985). These *zu'âma*, as they were called, were generally large landowners who acted as intermediaries to access services for the vast majority of poor Shi'a. This relationship meant that the Shi'a population was heavily characterised by clientelism and patronage. Harel Chorev describes these characteristics as follows:

"The Shi'a *zu'âma* were usually portrayed as having four channels for recruiting clients: (1) control of landed families over their sharecroppers; (2) capital of merchant families; (3) control over the allocation of national resources; and (4) ability to mediate between the public and the authorities. All of these made it possible for a *za'im* to provide his clients with protection and employment, and help them in their contacts with the authorities. This patronage-based socio-political structure was presented as being all-encompassing, characterising not only the relationships between the *za'im* and the public, but also between senior *zu'âma* and *zu'âma* of lower standing." (Chorev 2013:308)

This *zu'âma* system was not limited to the Shi'a population, and was also present among Christian and Sunni populations.

2.3 1945-1975: From Independence to Civil War

Following Lebanon's independence in 1943, control of the state and the country's economy continued to be concentrated in the hands of a narrow oligarchy. Between 1920 and 1972, deputies in the Parliament represented some 245 of Lebanon's most prominent families. By 1972, and after nearly 50 years of parliamentary life, 359 MPs had been elected of whom slightly more than 300 had inherited their seat because of family ties (Khalaf 1979:196). State policies reflected the interests of these political and economic elites, which aimed to maintain and strengthen Lebanon's position as a key financial intermediary between the Arab world and Europe (Gates 1989:32).

Several other regional factors favoured this intermediary role for Lebanon. The Palestinian *Nakba* and the creation of Israel in 1948 had contradictory consequences for the country. Firstly, the Arab boycott of Israel principally benefited Lebanon's service economy, with Beirut replacing Haifa as the main port of the Arab hinterland and as an international connection between Europe, Asia and some parts of Africa (Traboulsi 2007:113; Gaspard 2004:59). A number of wealthy and middle class Palestinians took refuge in Beirut, providing an inflow of capital. On the other side, the export sector suffered a severe blow, as goods shipped to Palestine were more important than exports to France, Great Britain and the US combined (Traboulsi 2007:113).

The presence of other diaspora groups in the country was also important, with Lebanon witnessing the arrival of sections of the commercial, financial and industrial bourgeoisie of Syria, Egypt and Iraq. This followed the nationalisation policies, agrarian reform, and increased state intervention by regimes in these countries. For this diaspora bourgeoisie, the Lebanese service sector became an essential point of contact with the international market (Nasr 1978:3). Finally, Lebanon's intermediary role with Western markets was strengthened considerably by the emergence of the Gulf oil economies and their expanding markets and surplus capital.

Due to this intermediary position between the West and the Arab world, the Lebanese economy in the first two decades after independence was largely

dominated by the service sector – trade, banking, transport, communications, tourism and professional services. In 1976, the service sector constituted 72 percent of the Lebanese economy (Dubar and Nasr 1976:67; Owen 1988:32). Within this sector, banking was dominant, helping to facilitate the development of Lebanon's intermediary function between the Western and Arab regions. The total volume of banks deposits jumped from 215 million Lebanese Pound (LP) in 1950 to 8220 million in 1974 (Dubar and Nasr 1976:69).

The Lebanese financial and mercantile bourgeoisie who controlled the banks was subordinate to international capital, particularly from France. France's influence in the country had been codified by the 1944 Catroux agreement, which brought Lebanon into the Franc zone and gave Paris a large measure of control over the reserves of foreign currency that Lebanese merchants needed to finance their imports (Traboulsi 2007:119). In addition to this, the concessions granted to French companies in major public institutions such as the Central Bank, the *Banque de Syrie et du Grand Liban* (BSGL), allowed France to maintain considerable influence.³⁵ French banks also came to dominate and control Lebanese banks such as *Banque Sabbagh* controlled by *Banque d'Indochine*, and *Banque G. Trad & Co.* taken over by *Le Credit Lyonnais* (Traboulsi 2007:119). France remained predominant in the banking system through the 1960s.

1965 saw the collapse of Intra Bank, the most important Lebanese-Arab owned bank, followed by other Lebanese banks in 1966. This plunged the economy into one of its most serious crises since 1943. Western financial capital was the main beneficiary of this crisis, through which it extended its direct control over the Lebanese financial sector and reduced the Lebanese banking sector to a situation of great dependency (Dubar and Nasr 1976:70). In 1975, the percentage of Lebanese-owned banks did not exceed 15 percent of the total banks in Lebanon, while Western financial institutions made up nearly 75 percent of the total number of foreign companies in Beirut (Dubar and Nasr 1976:71; Nasr 1978:4).

Alongside the predominant weight of finance and services, industrial production was

³⁵ The concession exercised by the BSGL lasted until 1964, when Lebanon was finally able to establish its own Central Bank.

limited, growing only minimally from 14.52 percent of GDP in 1950 to 16.7-18 percent in 1974 (Dubar and Nasr 1976:76; Traboulsi 2007:157). Lebanese industry followed a typical path of a dominated economy, with most production concentrated in low-wage light industry, particularly food processing, textiles and building materials (these sectors made up 67 percent of all industrial production and 58 percent of the whole labour force in the industrial sector in 1971) (Dubar and Nasr 1976:80). Industry as a whole faced a number of significant barriers including: competition from foreign goods, insufficient financial resources (medium and long term credit), the small size of the Lebanese market and the preference of the country's bourgeoisie to invest in trade and speculative activities rather than industry.³⁶

The dominant position of the commercial and financial bourgeoisie, linked closely to Western capital, also imposed itself on the structure of the agricultural sector. This dominance was expressed through provision of credit; distribution of pesticides, fertilizers, and agricultural equipment; ownership of packing and refrigeration; and sales and distribution of agricultural goods. Through their control over all segments of the agricultural commodity chain, large agricultural trading companies could maintain very low prices for producers and high prices for consumers, benefiting from the massive price differential. Market prices for agricultural goods averaged two or three times the prices paid to producers (Lebanese Communist Party (LCP) 1973 cited in Nasr 1978:10). This market power was backed by government policies that supported the interests of large landowners, who received the large majority of the Ministry of Agriculture's assistance while small farmers were neglected (Dahir 1974 cited in Nasr 1978:10).

This situation had important consequences for the structure of social relations in rural areas. Most significantly, agricultural production became increasingly dominated by

³⁶Nasr (1978:10) notes that Lebanese industry was divided into two distinct enterprise types. The first of these were craft and small-scale enterprises numbering less than 25 workers, the number of which was estimated at 10,700 firms in 1971. The production of these small enterprises accounted for one third of total industrial production, 40 percent of the value added, 42 percent of wage earners and more than 50 percent of the active population in industry. Their share in production was constantly declining, and they survived primarily on the basis of sub-contracting to large companies. In this manner, large enterprises benefitted from the low wages in these small firms, and were able to displace most of the risk arising from fluctuations in market demand. Moreover, the existence of the small-scale sector allowed larger industrial enterprises to maintain a constant downward pressure on wages in their own firms. Large-scale enterprises, those employing 25 or more wage earners, were responsible for two-thirds of industrial production despite only constituting 10 percent of industrial enterprises in 1971.

large farms located in areas such as the Bekaa Valley, Akkar and the southern coastal plains. These farms were frequently owned by urban elites, who forced traditional sharecroppers to leave the land. The proportion of sharecroppers in the active population fell from 25 percent in the 1950s to five percent in the 1970s (Dahir 1974 cited in Nasr 1978:6). After being displaced from their traditional livelihoods, former sharecroppers were forced to either move to Beirut, migrate abroad or to become agricultural wage labourers. If they chose the latter option, they faced very difficult working conditions and extremely low wages as a result of the cheap labour available to landowners from Palestinian refugee camps and Syrian migrants. There were an estimated 30,000 Lebanese and 15,000 Palestinian and Syrian agricultural wage labourers in 1970 (Direction Centrale de la Statistique 1972 cited in Nasr 1978:6).

Smallholder farmers, who constituted 57 percent of the active agricultural population in the early 1970s, faced similar pressures to sharecroppers but were able to survive the increased pauperization by engaging in more than one type of activity. More than half of all farmers at the end of the 1960s worked in a secondary, usually non-agricultural job (Gaspard 2004:91; Nasr 1978:6). The relative share of agriculture in the national economy declined from 20 percent of the GDP in 1948 to less than nine percent in 1974, while the share of the active population working in the sector decreased from 48.9 percent in 1959 to 18.9 percent in 1970 (Mallat 1973:6; Nasr 1978:13). The agrarian sector lost more than 100,000 active members in less than two decades (Dubard and Nasr 1976:100).

In this context, Lebanon experienced large-scale rural to urban migration during the two decades following independence, with the urban population rising sharply from 25 percent of the overall population in 1950 to 65 percent in 1975 (Nasr 2003:148). Most of these internal migrants joined the urban service sector, and came predominantly from Shi'a rural areas. By 1973, 63 percent of Shi'a were living in cities, including 45 percent in Greater Beirut (Harb 2010:42). These newcomers found jobs in the service sector, where they were subjected to severe exploitation in terms of wages and working conditions. These trends were reinforced by the lack of work opportunities in services and public administration for new graduates. The level

of unemployment grew from 70,000 people in 1969, about 10 to 13 percent of the workforce, to 120,000 people in 1974, representing 15 to 20 percent of the workforce (Nasr 1978:3). Great disparities remained between the centre (Mount Lebanon and Beirut) and the periphery (the suburbs of Beirut, the South of Lebanon, Akkar and the Bekaa). The annual per capita income in Beirut was estimated at \$803 in the early 1970s, while in South Lebanon it did not exceed \$151 (Traboulsi 2007:160). Rapid urbanization meant that Beirut was surrounded with a massive poverty belt in which 400,000 people out of a total population of 1 million lived on the eve of the Civil War in 1975 (Traboulsi 2007:161).

2.4 Class and Sectarian Divisions

By the early 1970s, Lebanese society was characterized by pronounced social, regional and sectarian inequalities. It was estimated in 1959-1960 by the French mission of inquiry IFRED (Institut Français de Recherche et d'Etudes du Développement) that four percent of the "very rich" were taking 33 percent of the national income, while the poorest 50 percent of the population received only 18 percent (cited in Farsoun K. and Farsoun S. 1974:95-96). A study conducted by Bishop Gregoire Haddad stated that 79 percent of the Lebanese population received less than the minimum income (1975 cited in Traboulsi 2007:162). Another indicator of these inequalities was that 84 percent of the total savings were undertaken by three to four percent of households until the mid 1960s (Gaspard 2004:76).

Overlaying these inequalities were clear sectarian and regional distinctions. As noted above, prior to independence, the Maronite bourgeoisie held a position of dominance. In 1973, the Christian fraction of the bourgeoisie owned 75.5 percent of total commercial companies, 67.5 percent of total industrial companies and 71 percent of the total of Lebanese owned banks (Labaki 1988b:166). At the same time, the Shi'a popular classes were relatively deprived. In terms of secondary education, 15 percent and 17 percent of Sunni and Christian respectively had finished their secondary education, while the percentage of Shi'a did not exceed 6.6 percent (Norton 1987:17). In 1971, the average Shi'a family's income was 4,532 LP in comparison with the national average of 6,247 LP (Norton 1987:17) (3 LP = 1 US\$).

Shi'a represented the highest percentage of families earning less than 1500 LP. They were also the most poorly educated, with 50 percent of Shi'a having no schooling (compared to 30 percent nation-wide). In 1974, the Shi'a-dominated South received less than 0.7 percent of the state budget while the region held 20 percent of the national population (Norton 1987:18).

Despite these differences, it is important to note that the gap between the Christian and Muslim populations had nonetheless narrowed and it would be wrong to ascribe class position solely on the basis of affiliation to sect. According to Nasr (2003:151), the upper class was divided between 65 percent Christians and 35 percent Muslims in 1975. The percentage of professionals in banking who were Muslim jumped from zero in 1950 to 35 percent in 1982–83, while the percentage of Muslim professionals in industry increased from 33 percent to 44 percent (Labaki 1988a:145). Similar trends could be seen within the poorer classes. One 1974 survey of 7070 workers in 26 of the largest industrial factories in the eastern suburb of Beirut found that the breakdown of the workforce was almost evenly divided between Muslim and Christian (54.96 percent and 45.04 percent respectively) (Dubar and Nasr 1976:88-90). The sample interviewed in this survey represented nearly 10 percent of total employment in factories employing more than five workers, and around 40 percent of workers in large industry. The results indicate that, at that time, a substantial number of Christian workers were found within the Lebanese labour force.

Despite its generalised impoverishment, the Shi'a population had undergone significant changes in the period following independence, particularly under the Presidency of Fuad Chehab (1958-1964). Chehab had attempted to integrate parts of the Shi'a population into the political administration of the country, and moderated regional inequalities through the development of economic, transport, electricity and water infrastructure.³⁷ His government imposed stricter quotas on the recruitment of civil servants and military personnel, which benefited Shi'a who were hitherto largely under-represented (Deeb L. 2006:73). Indeed, by the early 1970s, Shi'a represented 22 percent of Class I Civil Service posts (31 of 139 positions), up from just over 3 percent in the 1960s (Hazran 2010:533). Increased state intervention in education

³⁷ Chehab's policies did not mark a sharp break with economic liberalism but were rather oriented towards providing a more efficient framework for the functioning of the market (Daou 2013).

also benefited the Shi'a, who did not have a large network of private schools like the Maronite population. Thus in South Lebanon and the Bekaa (mostly populated by Shi'a), the number of pupils in primary and secondary schools increased from 62,000 in 1959 to 225,000 in 1973 (Nasr 1985). Similarly, the development of the Lebanese University, which was national and free, opened access to higher education for young Shi'a from poorer backgrounds. One indication of the impact of these reforms was the number of Muslims working in the state administration, which reached 47.32 percent in 1978 – up from 41.3 percent in 1943 (Labaki 1988b:175).

Another very significant trend affecting the development of the Shi'a population was the impact of international migration (as it had been for the Maronite population a century earlier). The growth of a Shi'a diaspora had begun during the French Mandate, with Shi'a from villages and small towns such as Nabatieh, Bint Jbeil, Tyr and Jouyya migrating to West Africa. In the 1950s and 1960s, these flows were redirected towards the Arab oil countries (Kuwait and Libya, in particular) (Labaki 1988b:175). By 1975, 50 percent of Shi'a in the Bekaa and 65 percent in South Lebanon had abandoned their villages. Some three-quarters, according to Salim Nasr (1978:10), settled in Lebanese cities and the remainder went abroad, chiefly to Africa and the Gulf.

The growth of an increasingly educated, younger middle class and a relatively prosperous Shi'a diaspora had begun to transform power relations in the community. Older established leaders of that community, the *zu'ama*, and the clerical leaders associated with them, were increasingly marginalised by migrants who used their remittances to purchase land and orchards, establish channels of commerce and carve out spheres of socio-political influence (Nasr 1985). This new layer of the Shi'a population initially directed its economic activities towards relatively minor sectors such as small-scale real estate, citrus cultivation, leisure businesses and trade with Africa (Nasr 1985). By the early 1970s, however, it had expanded into banks, industries and large commercial enterprises. This new elite, formed through the pathway of migration, could be seen in clerical institutions (Imam Sadr), the political sphere (MPs such as Y. Hammoud, S. Arab, H. Mansour), and financial activities (A. Jammal, H. Mansour) (Nasr 1978:10).

It was in this context that a key Shi'a-based party emerged, known as the movement of the "*Mahrumîn*" (later known as Amal), around the leadership of the cleric Moussa Sadr. Sadr was born in Iran and arrived in Lebanon in the early 1960s with significant funds to launch social projects for the Shi'a population. He sought to capitalise on the institutionalised discrimination of the Shi'a and to build a movement rival from the left, which was influential amongst the Shi'a at the time (Chorev 2013:309). Malek and Rula J. Abisaab (2014:114) argue that Moussa Sadr intended to weaken progressive and leftist political ideas among the Shia population. In order to achieve this goal, Sadr built alliances with important families such as the Beidun, Bazzi, Osseiran and Zein (the latter controlled the al-'Irfan newspaper which served as a platform for Sadr's political project) (Chorev 2013:309-310), while opposing specific traditional *zu'âma* (Deeb M. 1988:683)³⁸ families such as the As'ad.

It was under Sadr's initiative that the Shi'a were organised into a more coherent voice, codified in the creation of the Higher Islamic Shi'a Council in 1967 that had the goals of defending the rights of the community and improving its social and economic conditions, including the distribution of relief funds to Shi'a. In May 1969, Sadr was appointed to chair the Higher Islamic Shi'a Council. This Council was primarily conceived as a forum for the rising and increasingly influential Shi'a middle class and bourgeoisie and newly influential political Shi'a personalities, who in the past were blocked from political power and social influence by traditional Shi'a *zu'âma* (Sachedina 1991:445).

He was able to mobilise a great majority of the Shi'a population behind his movement of the "*mahrumîn*", established in 1974. The movement drew their strength from peasants, workers and urban middle classes who directly experienced the frustration caused by the under-representation of Shi'a in a political system dominated by the Maronite and Sunni bourgeoisie. Wealthy overseas Shi'a also supported him as they sought a place in this system, as well as a social status that corresponded to their newly acquired wealth (Daher 2014:46-47; Abisaab M. and Abisaab J. 2014:115-

³⁸ Some authors have claimed that he was assisted in this process by the Lebanese security services, with the objective of undermining the *zu'âma* while moderating the expanding Shi'a proletariat in Beirut's suburbs (Johnson 1986:149). Traboulsi (2007:23) claims that he was backed by the Shah of Iran.

116). Sadr wanted the state to act as a guarantor of the interests of the new and emerging Shia's bourgeoisie and able it to achieve a higher status in the administration and ministries (Abisaab M. and Abisaab R. 2014:115-116). Although Sadr did not challenge the sectarian basis of Lebanon's political arrangement, he was critical of Maronite domination and accused the various governments of neglecting the South and the Bekaa, rendering the Shi'a a "disinherited population in Lebanon" (Norton 1987:42). This was all the more significant given the substantial demographic changes in Lebanon at the time, with the Muslim population estimated at 55-60 percent of the Lebanese population by the early 1970s (Picard 1985:1000). Moreover, the Shi'a constituted the largest single confessional group in Lebanon on the eve of the Civil War, with an approximate population of 30 percent (equivalent to around one million people) (Norton 1987:17).

2.5 The Lebanese Civil War 1975-1990

The Lebanese Civil War began in 1975, and had profound consequences on these trends and the character of the sectarian system in the country. A full discussion of the causes of the Civil War is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is important to highlight some of the political and social changes that were occurring in the country at the time as part of situating the roots of Hezbollah's formation and the character of its relationship to the Shi'a population.

Foremost amongst these changes was the increasingly fractious debate opened up by the growing presence of the Palestinian resistance in Beirut and southern Lebanon. In addition to the 100,000 Palestinian refugees already located in Lebanon from the time of the 1948 *Nakba* (Norton 1987:8), South Lebanon had become the main geographical base of Palestinian armed groups following the events of "Black September" in 1970 in Jordan and the repression of Palestinian organisations by the Hashemite Kingdom. At the onset of the Civil War, the number of Palestinians living in Lebanon had reached around 260,000, of which more than half resided in refugee camps (Kassir 1994:74). Palestinians living in the camps were largely excluded by Lebanese law from full integration into Lebanese society,³⁹ while those who lived

³⁹ Palestinian refugees did not enjoy the minimal rights that normally go with the "refugee" status. Palestinians

outside of the camps generally had higher socio-economic standing. Many Palestinians in the camps were incorporated into Palestinian armed political organisations, mostly as military recruits (Kassir 1994:208). It should be noted as well that a great number of Lebanese Shi'a joined Palestinian armed organisations during this period (Norton 2007:16).

Political forces in Lebanon were increasingly divided over support to the Palestinian resistance and the large Palestinian presence in the country – questions that intersected with the future of the sectarian system described above. The Phalange party and its allies, organised in the Lebanese Front and led by Maronite notables such as Sulayman Frangieh, Charbel Qassis, Camille Chamoun and Charles Malek (Traboulsi 2007:187), criticised the resistance and sought to maintain the domination of the Maronite community in Lebanon's political and economic life. In opposition to the Lebanese Front, the LNM – led by the Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP)⁴⁰ in alliance with other leftist and nationalist movements – supported the Palestinian resistance and called for an end to the sectarian political system.

Within this constellation of forces, Lebanon's Shi'a saw increasing divisions between the poorer populations in Beirut and southern Lebanon and the community's leadership represented by Moussa Sadr's movement "*al-Mahrumîn*". In the early stages of the Civil War, Shi'a areas had been the targets of attacks by Phalangist

were barred from working in the public sector, where work permits depended on the economy's labour needs and personal connections. The Cairo Agreement signed on November 3, 1969 between the Lebanese government and the PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat redefined the regulations governing refugees in Lebanon. The key points approved in the Cairo Agreement were: to give the Palestinians in Lebanon the right to employment, residence, and movement; to form local committees in the camps; to establish posts of the Palestinian Armed Struggle inside the camps; to give the Palestinians in Lebanon the right to engage in the armed struggle (against Israel); to safeguard and protect the *fidā'in* path to the Arkub region in the South; to cease/end the propaganda between the two sides [the Palestinians and the Lebanese]; and to release prisoners and confiscated arms. The Lebanese Chamber of Deputies terminated the Cairo Agreement on May 21, 1987 unilaterally, restoring the pre-1969 status towards the Palestinians (Siklawi 2010:610).

In 2010, only 37 percent of Palestinian refugees of working age were employed. Palestinians face large-scale legal and socio-economic obstacles to work in Lebanon. By law, Palestinians refugees are not allowed to practice their professions in over 30 unions and 72 un-syndicated professions, including medical doctors, engineers, nurses and taxi drivers. With a signed contract from a company, Palestinians are able to obtain a work permit free of charge. Most Palestinians, however, are engaged in occupations that do not need work permits and many remain unaware of the procedures for regularising their status (UNHRC 2013:6).

⁴⁰ Born in 1917, Kamal Jumblatt is issued from one of the most important family of Druze notables. He is the founder of the PSP in 1949, mostly composed of Druze but with small number of Christian, Shi'a and Sunni. He was also one of the founders and leaders of the LNM. He was assassinated in 1977.

forces, including the infamous massacre of “Black Saturday” on 6 December 1975, in which numerous Shi’a were killed.⁴¹ In this context, the movement “*al-Mahrumîn*” initially participated in the LNM and held a strong relationship with Palestinian organisations, from 1975 the latter provided training bases, instructors and arms to the newly established movement’s military organisation “*Afwâj al-muqâwama al-lubnâniyya*” (known by its acronym *Amal*) (Nasr 1985). In May 1976, following the Syrian entry into Lebanon in support of the Lebanese Front against the LNM, Amal began to distance itself from the Palestinian resistance and eventually left the LNM (Norton 1987:42).⁴² This shift was criticised by large sections of the Shi’a population, which in its majority supported the LNM and the Palestinian resistance. Moreover, continued attacks by Phalangist forces against Shi’a areas – notably the agreement between the Kataeb and Amal, which in July of 1976 led to the expulsion of 100,000 Shi’a residents from the neighbourhood of Naba’a – further accentuated the divisions between the population as a whole and the stance of the Amal leadership (Daher 2014:49). Following the disappearance of Moussa Sadr in Libya in September 1978,⁴³ Amal entered into fierce battles with different forces of the LNM, particularly the LCP and the Pro-Iraqi Ba’th party. The latter was targeted because of the Assad regime’s hostility to the Iraqi Ba’th regime led by Saddam Hussein largely due to Hussein’s hostility and repression against the Shi’a political opposition in Iraq.⁴⁴

⁴¹ On Saturday December 6 1975, following the discovery of four mutilated bodies of members of their organisation, the Kataeb entered some neighbourhoods of the center of Beirut and killed dozens of Lebanese Muslims in revenge.

⁴² According to As’ad Abu Khalil, both actors needed each other and shared mutual interests: “when Al-Assad was facing growing sectarian tensions in his own country in the early 1970s, and when Syria’s Sunni were increasingly emphasising the non-Islamic nature of Alawism, Imam Moussa Sadr provided the Assad regime with crucial religious and political legitimacy by officially recognising the Alawite as Twelver Shi’a. Sadr did not try to conceal the political motivation for his measure; he even stated his opposition to the rising Islamic movement in Syria. It should be recalled that this fatwa was issued at a time when Sadr was looking for a patron to sponsor his embryonic organisation/militia that would later be declared as *Harakat al-Mahrumîn* (later known by the acronym of its military arm, Amal). Assad and Sadr needed one another for their own political purposes. The Assad regime returned the favour to Sadr; Amal was supplied and armed by the As-Saiqah in Lebanon. This pro-Syrian Palestinian organisation undertook to train followers of Sadr. By 1975, Amal had become a Lebanese tool of Syrian policy in Lebanon. Sadr consistently supported Syria’s policies and fluctuating alliances in Lebanon, even when those policies were highly unpopular among Lebanese Shi’a” (Abu Khalil 1990:9).

At the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War, Amal became at this point the major pillar in the formation of the Nationalist Front (Al-Jabha al-Qawmiyya) which was established in December 1975 as the Syrian counterpoise to Kamal Jumblat’s LNM. Amal became inextricably linked to the Assad regime which has used Amal whether in fighting against the Lebanese government led by Amine Gemayel during the years of 1983-84, culminating in the takeover of West Beirut on February 6 1984, or by unleashing Amal against the Palestinian refugee camps during May-June 1985, April-July 1986, and October 1986-February 1987. In all these conflicts the interests of Amal were secondary to those of the Assad regime in Syria. In fact Amal has become Assad’s most important proxy and has enabled Syria to achieve a range of policy objectives in Lebanon (Deeb M. 1988:697).

⁴³ In August 1978, Sadr disappeared without a trace in Libya after a meeting with Mu’amar Qadhafi.

⁴⁴ The regime of Saddam Hussein launched in 1979 an intense repression against the Shi’a religious and political

These battles reflected a competition over the political leadership of the Shi'a population, with the LCP and Ba'th holding a strong base of support in Shi'a suburbs of South Beirut (Kassir 1994:104).

In addition to the regional dimensions that underlay the root causes of the Civil War, the conflict also indicated profound social discontent with the political and economic situation in the country. Deepening social inequalities had given birth to a growing trans-confessional social and political movement struggling for better working and salary conditions, freedom of trade unions, democratisation and a secularisation of the Lebanese system. On the political level, the challenge to the political and economic elites coalesced under the LNM. Since 1967, leftist and nationalist forces had increased their strength in different social struggles, trade unions and other institutions (Dubar and Nasr 1976:326). The result of the legislative elections in 1972 and regional elections in the South in 1974 registered a growth in support for leftist candidates as well as candidates of the Amal movement – both forces challenging the power of the traditional elites.⁴⁵

Despite the widespread anger at the socio-economic situation, indicated by numerous individual and collective acts directed against symbols of wealth and power during the Civil War (industries, large stores, warehouses), (Traboulsi 2007:234) its political expression tended to fall back into sectarian lines. This was partly the result of a weakness in the organisation of the urban workforce, which related to the disproportionate size of the unorganised informal sector linked directly to sectarian organisations (Dubar and Nasr 1976:332). The rate of union membership in the mid 1970s did not exceed six percent (Gaspard 2004:65). The weakness of organised labour undermined attempts to build across sectarian lines, although mobilisations by the General Union of Lebanese Workers (GULW) in the later years

elites willing to support the Iranian revolution, including the murder of the Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr in April 1980, spiritual guide of the Islamic movement al-Dawa, while hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Shi'a were deported to Iran under the pretext that they were Iranians (Roy 2008:31; Mervinb 2007:305).

⁴⁵ In the regional election in December 1974, in Nabatieh the candidate backed by Imam Sadr and Amal won 20,000 votes, against 7,000 for the candidate of the 'feudal' leader K. Al-As'ad and nearly 5,000 for two candidates of the left. The elections of the Executive Committee of the Shi'a Supreme Council in 1975 resulted in the following representation: 5 candidates from the list of left parties, five candidates from a list of Sadrists and 2 independent left-wing candidates personally very close to the Imam Moussa Sadr. This body is elected by an electorate of 1,200 members consisting essentially of elected Shi'a politicians, senior officials, members of the liberal professions, presidents of unions and associations, academics and other few similar categories (Nasr 1985).

of the Civil War did express an important counterpoint to sectarianism (see Chapter 6).

In addition to this underlying social structure, the ideological orientation of the LNM and some sections of the left reinforced the increasingly sectarian turn of the Civil War. In many ways, this related to the conception of 'community class' discussed in the previous chapter, which excluded large sections of the Christian popular classes who came to be seen as a homogenous entity and representative of the "bourgeoisie". At the same time, the LNM deepened its alliance with Muslim elites and some Islamic groups, leading it to increasingly abandon socio-economic demands and the goal of secularising political structures (Picard 1985:1014; Chiit 2009; Daou 2013). Fawaz Traboulsi (2007:214) described the LNM's position as increasingly defensive by dropping its reform programme and adopting an increasingly Arab nationalist discourse with sectarian themes, in which sects were divided between "patriotic" and "non patriotic ones".

These trends confirm the prognosis of Mehdi Amel (1986:212), who argued that the bourgeoisie would attempt to give a confessional aspect to the class struggle in order to maintain its own dominant position. The confessional inflexion of class struggle reflected the ability of the bourgeoisie to impose itself as the representatives of subordinated classes, making the latter dependant on its political and confessional representation (Amel 1986:125). In this manner, the positions of the LNM and some sections of the left paved the way for increased sectarianism and the facilitation of foreign interference in the internal politics of the country (Picard 1985:1016-1017; Chiit 2009; Daou 2013).

The departure of the Palestinian political and armed forces – in addition to thousands of civilians – of Lebanon in late August and early September of 1982 also constituted a big blow for the progressive and national forces of Lebanon. This was after 79 days of siege of East Beirut, which was completely deprived of water and electricity during this period by the Israeli army.⁴⁶ The progressive and national forces of Lebanon lost

⁴⁶ The new invasion of the Israeli army of Lebanon, which reached Beirut, at the beginning of June 1982 was intended principally to evict the PLO and impose Bashir Gemayel, head of the Maronite Christian Phalange party, as President of Lebanon in order to get Lebanon to sign a peace treaty with Israel and bring the country

an important political and military ally and were now on their own against the rest of the Lebanese bourgeois and sectarian forces, even ex allies such as Amal who had increasingly begun to oppose the presence of Palestinian forces. At the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, the Amal movement, headed by Nabih Berri alongside other traditional Muslim leaders, led the opposition to the Palestinian mini state,⁴⁷ demanding the halt of military operations from Lebanese territory and the return of Lebanese authorities to the South (Traboulsi 2007:214). In addition to this, Syria did not hesitate to militarily train young Amal members on its soil in the early 1980s. Syria saw the organisation as a tool to check and undermine Palestinian power in Lebanon (Norton 2007:32).

In the two years preceding the Israeli invasion of June 1982, frequent clashes occurred between Amal on one side, and the Palestinian organisations and LNM on the other.

The LNM, which had lost many political forces since its establishment in 1969, was dissolved following the 1982 Israeli invasion, increasing the process of sectarianisation in the Lebanese political scene. In addition to PLO forces, the Israeli forces targeted the Lebanese nationalist and progressive organisations that had members from various religious sects, weakening them considerably, politically and militarily. All this while the Lebanese sectarian political forces, among them Druze, Christian and Shi'a, were not the object of Israeli attacks, or only at the margin (Achcar and Chomsky 2007:52).

The Lebanese National Resistance Front (LNRF), commonly known by its Arab acronym as *Jammul*, was nevertheless established in 1982 by the LCP, the OCAL, the Arab Socialist Action Party Lebanon (ASAP-L) and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP). This new coalition had the objective of replacing the LNM, but above

into Israel's sphere of influence (Bensaid 1982). The expulsion of the PLO and Palestinian civilians occurred following an agreement with the USA, brokered by the United States Special Envoy Philip Habib. The leadership, cadres, fighters, civilians and institutions of the Palestinian national movement were forced to leave Beirut, and they were scattered to Tunisia, Yemen, Sudan, Syria, and Libya. Yasser Arafat, head of the PLO and Fatah, and thousands of its supporters who had transferred their headquarters from Beirut to Tripoli (Lebanon), in June 1982, left Lebanon in November/December 1982 following fights with other Palestinian organisations supported by the Syrian regime.

⁴⁷ The PLO had almost complete control over certain areas of Lebanon using their own police force, military and economic infrastructure.

all to resist the Israeli occupation. The LNRF staged its first attack on September 20 1982, four days after its creation and two days following the massacres in the Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camps by the Phalangist militias in cooperation with the Israeli army. By the spring of 1985, the LNRF had succeeded in driving the Israelis out of the western Bekaa, Rashaya and other large areas in the South. The leadership of the Front then decided to bring the fight to the Israelis by attacking targets inside the “security belt,” the highly militarized strip of territory along Lebanon’s southern border that the Israelis used as a buffer zone (Diab 2012). Nevertheless, this period was the beginning of the end of the LNRF, which was the target of not only Israel, but also the Syrian regime following the refusal of the LNRF’s leadership to submit to the demands of “coordination” with Syria (Diab 2012). In addition, from 1984, economic assistance to the LNRF from the USSR and Arab countries was ceased (Daher 2014:103).

Over the next few years, the LNRF’s leadership was subject to a wave of assassinations that were attributed to Islamic forces close to Hezbollah, as we will see later in the text, and also to Amal. At the same time, according to Elias Atallah (then the LNRF’s top commander), Amal and Hezbollah would frequently inform the Syrians of any LNRF plans they caught wind of. The LNRF’s resistance attacks became less frequent and less successful (Nash 2008).

The internal fighting between leftist groups – including remaining PLO elements and the Druze PSP – and Amal in the Lebanese capital in 1987 also weakened the LNRF, while the entry of Syrian forces into West Beirut increasingly prevented the LNRF's frame of actions.

After Amal suspended most of its resistance activities following Israel's first withdrawal in 1985, and because the Syrian regime progressively prevented with all its capacities all of the LNRF's resistance activities, Hezbollah gradually became the sole resistance movement, strongly supported by the Syrian and Iranian regimes (Traboulsi 2007:230). The Ta’if agreement then acknowledged Hezbollah as the sole resistance actor. The Islamic party with its close ties to Tehran would therefore carry the resistance torch, but only if it coordinated closely with Damascus.

Following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and a growing turn towards sectarian politics, basic survival for much of the population – particularly in the capital Beirut – was increasingly linked to the control of resources by various militias. Political, economic and administrative functions in Beirut were divided between ten militia-controlled territories, largely built around illegal ports. Militias took over most of the state's income generating functions, including customs duties and indirect taxes, and the collection of a "protection tax" from families in areas that they controlled (Traboulsi 2007:232; Chiit 2009). Militias were also involved in: arms and drug trafficking, contraband sale of commercial goods and livestock, piracy and attacks on banks and ports. These groups maintained trade relations between themselves because none of them could achieve full economic independence in the neighbourhoods under their authority. After 1983, the main militias took control over a major part of the import trade and all distribution of fuel and flour. They would develop into large business enterprises, which not only invested their revenues in the war effort, but also in a number of "holding companies" registered in Lebanon (Traboulsi 2007:237).

The Civil War also brought considerable social dislocation. 15 years of conflict resulted in the deaths of 71,328 people, with a further 97,184 injured (Traboulsi 2007:238). The demography of Lebanon was modified during this period as the sectarian cleansing of the various militia cantons led to the displacement of 670,000 Christians and 157,500 Muslims (Abou Rjeili and Labaki 1994:256; Nasr 2003:146). This meant an increasing homogeneity of the various districts and a corresponding segregation of the population along sectarian lines – patterns that would endure in the post Civil War environment. No more than 30 percent of the displaced were to return to their homes after the Civil War (Nasr 2003:150). Moreover, nearly a third of the population of Lebanon, estimated at 894,717 people, left the country during the Civil War (Abou Rjeili and Labaki 1994:256). As a result, the bulk of the Lebanese workforce became employed abroad; the structure of the economy leaned even more in favour of the tertiary and rentier activities at the expense of the productive sectors, which suffered most of the destruction (Traboulsi 2007:238).

2.6 Hezbollah's Establishment

Although officially established in 1985, Hezbollah began to be active militarily and politically from mid-1982, operating under the banner of the “Islamic Resistance” (Traboulsi 2007:229-230).⁴⁸ The emergence of the organisation was associated with several factors in the context of this fractured state increasingly dominated by militias. First, since the early sixties, young *ulema* of Lebanese origin came back from Najaf in Iraq and tried to re-establish – each on their own – the political and social role of the theologists (Qassem 2008:25-26). Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, Muhammad Mahdi Chamsedine and Moussa Sadr were the most prominent, and are mentioned by Naim Qassem (2008:25-30) as key actors in the Shi’a population and in the origins of Hezbollah. Moussa Sadr was the one who most influenced the Shi’a population and its different social environment. It was his political culture, which he contributed through the Movement of the “*Mahrumîn*”, and the communitarian awakening he provoked that played an important role in the creation of Hezbollah. The members of Hezbollah today, like its current Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, Naim Qassem and others such as Hussein Mussawi, were originally members of the Movement of the “*Mahrumîn*” (Charara and Dromont 2004:86). He is still often cited in speeches of Hezbollah officials.

Although he was never a member of the party, Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah played an important role in the origins of the Islamic movement, and he is often displayed as the spiritual father of Hezbollah (Mervin 2008c:277). Without occupying an official position in the party, he was in many ways its leading ideologue throughout the 1980s. His speeches were published in Hezbollah’s newspapers (*al-Ahed*), and he encouraged the members of the *al-Dawa*⁴⁹ Lebanese branches to merge with

⁴⁸ According to the author Al-Madini, Sayyid Abbas Al-Mussawi along with his students and other leading *ulema* officially established “the Hezbollah of Lebanon” in 1979 following the establishment of the IRI (Al-Madini 1999 cited in Alagha 2007:88).

⁴⁹ The *al-Dawa* party was originally established in Iraq in 1958 as an Islamic alternative to the communist party. It became the main Shi’a Islamic party in the country. It expanded its field of influence in different countries of the region, notably Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Kuwait and Bahrain. This secret organisation lauds to overthrow the regimes in power in the objective to establish an Islamic state. The organisation offered to its followers a political and theoretical formation, it enumerated few thousands militants and sympathisers in Lebanon in the end of the seventies. A number of them will join the Hezbollah after its creation, such as Muhammad Raad, Abbas Al-Mussawi and *Sheikh* Subhi Tufayli. The Lebanese *Dawa* was disbanded, and its erstwhile members were instructed by party strategists to infiltrate the secular Amal and reform it from within. (Norton 2007:31). The Lebanese *Dawa* activists also established a network of secret armed cells, dubbed Qassam, that was based

Hezbollah (Mervin 2008c:278).

Fadlallah first engaged politically on the side of Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr, who was the main spiritual guide of al-Dawa party in Iraq, where he was born and raised. He was one of the theorists of al-Dawa, notably through his publications in the magazine “*al-Adwâ’ al-Islâmiyya*” (the Islamic Holy Lights), directed by Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr (Mervin 2008c:278). In 1966, he went back to the popular neighbourhood of Naba’a in Lebanon, which was inhabited in majority by Palestinians and Lebanese Shi’a. He opened a *husayniyya*, a dispensary called the “Usra al-Tâkhî” (Fraternity Family) and a hawza,⁵⁰ the Islamic Legal Institute (al-Ma’had al-char’î al-islâmî), which was a unique institution in Lebanon for advanced religious studies modelled on the seminaries of Najaf (Charara 2007:63-71; Blandford 2011:26). In 1966, “*al-Ittihâd al-Lubnânî lil-talaba al-Muslimîn*” (The Lebanese Union of Muslim Students), which was the first Shi’a Islamic student organisation in Lebanon, was established under Fadlallah's influence and patronage. His political thought was published in the magazine of the organisation, “*al-Muntalaq*”. The organisation's students used to follow the religious courses of Fadlallah in the Islamic Legal Institute in Naba’a (Charara 2007:88; Mervin 2007:311).

Many young people were attracted to Fadlallah and some gravitated around him, distinguishing themselves later on in Hezbollah, such as Ali Fayyad (Hezbollah MP) and Muhammad Said Al-Khansa (Hezbollah Mayor of Ghobeyri) (Harb 2010:239). In 1976, he left Naba’a with the rest of the Shi’a local population following the agreement between Amal and the Kataeb and relocated to Dahyeh, after a short passage in Bint Jbeil. Fadlallah was first supportive of the IRI and of the concept of *Wilâyat al-Faqîh*⁵¹ (Mervin 2008c:281). He was also a supporter of the export of the Islamic revolution, considering it a duty following the establishment of the IRI in 1979. In the middle and late 1980s, he became more critical of the Islamic Movement in Iran and of the IRI (Mervin 2008c:282), and in the early 1990s his relation with Iran and Hezbollah became more distant (International Crisis Group (ICG) 2003:13), as

mainly in Beirut, and targeted particularly fighters from the Iraqi Ba’th party, especially after war broke out between Iran and Iraq (Blandford 2011:35).

⁵⁰ Hawza is the traditional religious Shi’a school forming *ulema* (Mervin 2008c:348).

⁵¹ The theory of the *Wilâyat al-Faqîh* is that a guardianship of the jurisprudent or jurisconsult should hold ultimate political power. In 1987, Hassan Nasrallah explained that the authority of this leader is both spiritual and political, and may not be challenged (cited in Lamloun 2008a:29).

we will see in chapter 5.

The establishment and development of Hezbollah must also be understood in the framework of the political dynamics and developments of the IRI. As we will see further in the text, Hezbollah has been politically, socially and financially supported by the IRI since its official establishment in 1985 and even before with the activities of groups linked to it. In the ten years following the overthrow of the Shah and the establishment of the IRI, the regime's foreign policy was dominated by the two main ideological foreign policy principles of the revolution: "Neither East nor West" and the "Export of the Revolution" (Rakel 2009:113). The policy of exporting "the revolution" was particularly promoted during the first years of the revolution by the conservative factions of the IRI.

In the summer of 1982, the IRI decided to send 1,500 soldiers from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), known as Pasdaran,⁵² to training camps set up in the Syrian city of Zabadani and in the western Bekaa district (with Syria's authorisation) (Norton 1987:19).⁵³ According to Norton (2000:11): "the contingent quickly became the nodal point for the Iranian training, supply, and support of Hezbollah under the watchful eye of Ali Akbar Mohtashemi, then Iran's ambassador to Damascus".⁵⁴ Khomeini also instructed the Iranian Defence Minister at the time, Khomeini (the current Supreme Leader), to keep a close eye on Hezbollah and take

⁵² The Pasdaran has been used by the Islamic Republic's leadership to suppress internal dissent. Khomeini actively employed the Revolutionary Guards to coerce and, when necessary, crush former political allies as he consolidated power. The Islamic Republic's law made the Revolutionary Guards not only a military organisation deterring foreign threats but also a political-military organisation tasked with fighting domestic opposition. Article 2 of the statute's second chapter defined an IRGC role as the "legal fight against elements or movements who aim at sabotaging or dismantlement of the Islamic Republic or act against the Islamic Revolution of Iran," and Article 3 stressed the IRGC's mission also as a "legal fight against elements waging an armed struggle to nullify the authority of the laws of the Islamic Republic (Alfoneh 2008).

⁵³ Syrian support of Hezbollah did not always prevent disagreements between the two sides. During the "War of the Camps" (1985-1988), for example, Amal, supported by the Syrian regime, clashed violently with Palestinian organisations, which Hezbollah supported. Military repression by the Syrian regime against Hezbollah also occurred on February 24 1987, when the Syrian army assassinated 27 members of Hezbollah in the Fathallah military barracks in Basta, West Beirut (Lamloum 2008b:96).

⁵⁴ In the beginning of the 1990s, the Pasdaran presence was reduced by about two-thirds, and by 1998 the remainder of the Iranian contingent was withdrawn. At the same time as establishing these training camps, Iran sponsored the establishment of a "Shura Lubnân", the Council of Lebanon. The Council had as a role to organise and oversee the activities and programs of Hezbollah within Lebanon and to operate as a nodal connection between Iran and Lebanon. The Council was constituted of five men, including three Lebanese and two Iranians: Subhi Tufayli (al-Dawa representative), Abbas Al-Mussawi (representative of the *Ulema* assembly of the Bekaa), Muhammad Raad (representative of "*al-Ittihâd al-Lubnânî lil-talaba al-Muslimîn*" (The Lebanese Union of Muslim Students)) Ali Akbar Mohtashemi (Iranian ambassador in Syria) and Ahmad Kan'ani (head of the Pasaran in Lebanon) (Nasrallah 1994 cited in Daher 2014:85).

full responsibility of it (Alagha 2007:94).

The attempt by the new Iranian leadership to export the Islamic revolution was further accompanied by the imposition of religious practices and discourses following Khomeini's ideology in the regions where the IRGC and Hezbollah were present. Upon their arrival, IRGC soldiers spread Khomeini's theories on Islam in Baalbek and surrounding villages, while pictures of Khomeini and Iranian flags became much more prevalent in the region. In addition, the main square in Baalbek was renamed after Khomeini; more women were wearing full-length black chador and alcohol was removed from many shops and hotels (Blanford 2011:45).

Between 1984 and 1986, Hezbollah and groups linked to it attempted to impose Sharia rule and conservative social codes in areas it controlled (Daher 2014:116), notably in some areas of West Beirut and in villages of the Bekaa such as Machghara. Owners of grocery stores were forbidden to sell alcohol, while others were deliberately attacked. Shops and restaurants had to close on religious days. In some cases they also forbade Christians in the Ras Beirut neighbourhood close to the American University of Beirut and Hamra, to perform their own religious celebrations (Charara 2007:356-357). Hezbollah was also accused of plastering posters of Khomeini on walls in Beirut, harassing women who were said to be immodestly dressed and bombing shops selling alcoholic beverages (Jaber 1997:51-53). As Hezbollah became ever more entrenched in the South following Israel's withdrawal and the establishment of the security zone in June 1985, it banned the sale of alcohol, parties, dancing, mixed swimming on the long beaches of Tyr and closed down cafés (Chehabi 2006:226). In some villages in the Bekaa Valley, Christians were reported to have left their villages because of the atmosphere of fear and threat imposed by Hezbollah (Charara 2007:356-357).

This very close link between Iran and Hezbollah was reflected by the declarations during this period by the groups' leaders. *Sheikh* Hassan Trad, Imam of the mosque of the Imam Mehdi in Ghobeyri at the time and Hezbollah member, said that "Iran and Lebanon are one people and one country" (1986 cited in Charara 2007:250). Ali Akbar Mohtashemi, Iran's ambassador to Syria from 1982 to 1986, played a pivotal

role in the establishment of Hezbollah: “we will support Lebanon as we support militarily and politically our Iranian provinces” (cited in Charara 2007:250); Sayyid Ibrahim Al-Sayyid, at the time Hezbollah's spokesman: “We do not say that we are part of Iran, we are Iran in Lebanon, and Lebanon in Iran” (1987 cited in Charara 2007:250).⁵⁵

Another key element in the emergence of Hezbollah was Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, which saw support for Amal plummet as the organisation was widely perceived as having offered tacit endorsement of the June invasion (Norton 2000:9). In July 1982, Amal Deputy head and official spokesman of the party, Hussein Mussawi (who later cofounded Hezbollah and who was attracted to the model of the IRI), accused Amal's leadership of blatant collaboration with Israeli occupying forces (Norton 1987:88). Another point of contention of Amal members was the participation of Amal leader Nabih Berri in the National Salvation Committee (NSC). The NSC was created by Lebanese President Elias Sarkis to foster dialogue between the most powerful militia leaders including Bashir Gemayel, who was viewed as an Israeli ally during the Civil War. Therefore, the NSC was described by many of Amal's youth as an ‘American Israeli bridge’ (Norton 1987:105). Indeed, according to Norton, Amal leaders, notably Nabih Berri and Daoud Sulayman Daoud, were seeking a *modus vivendi* with Israel and the United States. They assumed that the latter was now the major power in Lebanon (Norton 2000:13). Norton argues (1987:50): “there is no doubt that Berri's willingness to contemplate a deal that would privilege Syria's enemies provoked Damascus to lend support to Hezbollah as a counterweight to Amal” and led to the Syrian regime accepting the establishment and development of Hezbollah during this period in the regions under the authority of Damascus in Lebanon (Lamloun 2008b:95).

The initiative to establish Hezbollah came mostly from Amal members at odds with the leadership of Nabih Berry, who had become Amal's leader following Sadr's

⁵⁵ Following the death of Khomeini in 1989 and the end of the Iraq-Iran war in 1988, the IRI and segments of the conservative faction softened their position considerably on the two principles of foreign policy (“Neither East nor West” and the “Export of the Revolution”). The regime's foreign policies have since then been more or less independent of the composition of factions that control the republican institutions and religious supervisory bodies (Rakel 2009:113). These changes will have consequences on Hezbollah, as the next chapter will discuss.

death.⁵⁶ These Amal members formed an organisation called Islamic Amal (led by Hussein Mussawi), and allied themselves with other Shi'a groups such as the al-Dawa party, "*al-Ittihad al-Lubnani lil-talaba al-Muslimin*" (The Lebanese Union of Muslim Students), and the *Ulema* assembly of the Bekaa. These organisations represented a geographical base of the Shi'a Islamic leadership from Beirut to the Bekaa Valley. Following cooperation and joint activities between 1982 and 1985, they produced a joint document entitled "Manifesto of the Nine",⁵⁷ and advanced the following objectives:

- Islam is the comprehensive, complete and appropriate programme for a better life. It is the intellectual, religious, ideological and practical foundation for the proposed organisation.
- Resistance against Israeli occupation, which is a danger to both the present and future, is the ultimate priority given the anticipated effects of such occupation on Lebanon and the region. This necessitates the creation of a jihad structure that should further this obligation, and in favour of which all capabilities are to be employed.
- The legitimate leadership is designed to the Guardianship of the Jurist who is considered to be the successor to the Prophet and the Imam. The Jurist Theologian draws the general guiding direction for the nation of Islam. His commands and proscriptions are enforceable." (cited in Qassem:32)

These groups dissolved their existing organisations in favour of a single new party, which later came to be known as Hezbollah.

An important part of Hezbollah's legitimacy in its beginning was the military struggle it

⁵⁶ Nabih Berri rejected the Iranian-influenced Islamic national model espoused by some members of Amal. In addition Hussein Mussawi, a member of the Amal Command Council, opposed Berri's presence on the National Salvation Committee (see earlier note) (Shanahan 2005:113).

Mussawi also opposed the fact that the leadership was no longer led by clerics (Louer 2008:59).

⁵⁷ The name came from the nine representatives elected to speak for the convening parties: three stood for the clerical congregation of the Bekaa, three represented the various Islamic committees, and three spoke for the Islamic Amal's movement (Qassem 2008:33).

waged against the Israeli occupation. During this period, groups acting under the banner of the “Islamic resistance” also pursued military operations against the US presence in Lebanon, notably through an attack against the US embassy in April 1983 and against the US Marine barracks in October 1983, which led to the departure of the American marines from Lebanon (Norton 2000:1). Both attacks were largely considered to have been carried out under the order of the IRI (Norton 2007:71).

Following the withdrawal of Israel from Beirut in 1983, Hezbollah engaged in an active recruitment campaign in Beirut’s southern suburbs with a view to expand into Amal’s heartland of South Lebanon (Shanahan 2005:115). In 1984, the party established its political bureau and its weekly newspaper *al-‘Ahed*, which expressed support to the IRI during the Iraq-Iran war and praised the aid brought to Hezbollah by the IRGC (Lamloun 2008a:23). This was followed a year later by the publication of “Hezbollah’s Open Letter to the Downtrodden of Lebanon and the World”, a political manifesto that formally declared the existence of the movement. The manifesto (*Al-rissâla al-maftûha allati wajjahaha “Hizb Allâh” ila al-mustad’afîn* 1985) held up the 1978-79 Iranian revolution as an inspiration to action, a proof of what could be accomplished when the faithful gather under the banner of Islam. It stated the movement’s belief in Ayatollah Khomeini as the “single wise and just leader”, in line with Khomeini’s own vision of *Wilâyat al-Faqîh*. The manifesto outlined Hezbollah’s rejection of Israel on the grounds that it had occupied Muslim land and had an expansionist agenda. It also expressed Hezbollah’s opposition to Western nations, particularly the United States, due to their support for Israel (*Al-rissâla al-maftûha allati wajjahaha “Hizb Allâh” ila al-mustad’afîn* 1985).

Reflecting its origins, Hezbollah’s members were mostly drawn from young clerics who were opposed to Amal’s non-clerical leadership and its accommodation with Lebanese clientelism and the political system. Shi’a who had fought alongside Palestinians prior to the expulsion of the PLO from Beirut were compelled by circumstance and conviction to join the ranks of Hezbollah (Nir 2011:44). The party’s unequivocal opposition to both the Israeli invasion and the Lebanese political system thus drew supporters away from Amal and into its own sphere of influence.

Significant levels of financial support from Iran was another factor that allowed the party to grow to the detriment of Amal, with Hezbollah able to “offer not only the virtue of ideological simplicity and authenticity, but the rewards of hard cash as well” (Norton 1987:106). Hezbollah fighters were well paid and guaranteed to receive a regular monthly salary from Iran, while Amal’s members were dependent on the Shi’a of Lebanon for their funds. Hezbollah could afford full time gunmen and possessed an extensive system for the payment of pensions to the families of martyrs, while many Amal cadres were part-time and volunteers (Norton 1987:106). By the middle of the 1980s, members of Hezbollah received \$300 per month, compared to \$100–150 in other militias including the South Lebanon Army (SLA) sponsored by Israel (Picard 2000:198).

The rivalry between the two organisations was most sharply expressed in the southern suburbs of Beirut, where the two groups fought each other over leadership of the Shi’a population. Hezbollah and Amal waged a struggle against leftist parties and intellectuals in these areas and the South of Lebanon, most significantly against the LNRF, as we will see in chapter 7.

The suburbs are strategically localised at the entry of the capital Beirut on the road that leads to the South. In this area, Hezbollah’s political activities were mostly concentrated in Dahyeh – particularly the neighbourhood of Ghobeyri – where they launched what was described as “Islamic work” through committees operating in mosques and *hussayniyyât* (public meeting rooms dedicated to the Imam Hussein, the third Imam in Shi’a Islam) (Harb 2010:59).⁵⁸ Dahyeh was home to half a million Shi’a, many of whom had been displaced there following the Israeli occupation of the South of Lebanon or attacks by Christian militias on eastern Beirut suburbs such as Naba’a and Sin El-Fil. The concentration of the Shi’a population in this area means that it came to provide an important base of power at the national level (Harb 2010:78). Finally, the southern suburbs lacked basic and necessary services for a population in need, and thus presented great potential of investments in institutions and services for the political actor controlling this space or its supporters (Harb El-

⁵⁸ Hussein was the grandson of Muhammad that refused to pledge allegiance to Yazid, the Umayyad Caliph.

Kak 1996).

Hezbollah's growth in these areas was further facilitated by the expansion of its charitable, medical and educational activities – funded principally by Iran.⁵⁹ As Picard notes, in deprived areas such as the Bekaa and Beirut's southern suburbs Hezbollah strengthened its popular base by establishing "local branches of numerous Iranian foundations created during the Iran-Iraq War to provide aid to various groups of the injured (orphans and the wounded) and for reconstruction, or for the support of social services" (Picard 2000:308). In practice the organisation set up its own social services independently from the state, structured around a set of autonomous organisations operating in networks and providing a complete range of assistance to Shi'a (discussed in Chapter 5 below) (Qassir 2011). During the Civil War, Hezbollah guaranteed the distribution of electricity to the population of Dahyeh during power outages through its own generators, and took care of garbage collection and repair of water and sewage pipes (Harb 2010:77). They also provided jobs to youth who were by and large unemployed during the Civil War, and for whom the only alternative was to become member of a militia. Those employed in Hezbollah institutions were not required to join the party, but had to respect its Islamic ideology including Islamic dress codes (Harb El-Kak 1996).

This large social support network, and the on-going growth of the Shi'a population in the southern suburbs of Beirut, South Lebanon and the Bekaa, massively expanded the constituency of the party. It enabled Hezbollah to position itself as a massive welfare provider with the support of Iran, transmitting the political and ideological beliefs of the Iranian Islamic Revolution to the poor Shi'a families and larger sectors of the Shi'a population. As explained by academics Dina Matar, Atef Alshaer and Lina Khatib, it has:

⁵⁹ The level of Iranian financial support today is difficult to determine because it is largely channelled through non-governmental routes. Estimates, however, range from between \$100 and \$400 million a year. Abdallah Safieddine, Hezbollah's representative in Iran, has acknowledged that his organisation receives funding directly from the *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* himself. The Iranian Supreme Leader has sole control of the distribution of these funds to Hezbollah, and this is why it is largely unaffected by changes of governments in Iran (Norton 2007:110; Saad Ghorayeb 2012). Hezbollah nonetheless claims that donations and taxes of rich Shi'a businesspeople and other generous sponsors in the diaspora provide the bulk of financing to the party (Harb 2010:94). This statement is quite unlikely as in the beginning of 2015 Hezbollah had to impose salary cuts on personnel, defer payments to suppliers and reduce monthly stipends to its political allies in Lebanon after increase economic problems in the IRI due to lower oil revenues and international sanctions (Blanford 2015).

“sought to legitimize Iran’s symbolic leadership through the use of evocative and historically meaningful language and symbols with the aim of naturalising and legitimising Iran’s guidance and role among a local public already familiar with its religious political discourses... To emphasize the links with Iran and its leadership as role models, *al-‘Ahed*, Hezbollah first formal media outlet, began to disseminate the writings and speeches of Iran’s spiritual and revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, describing him as the guiding spiritual role model and force behind Hezbollah’s self image as a group fighting injustice and the “mustakbirin” (arrogant forces).” (Khatib, Matar and Alshaer 2014:43)

This also went with the display of large posters of Khomeini in the neighbourhoods and areas under the control of Hezbollah. This practice is still very apparent today, alongside large posters of the current supreme leader of the IRI, Ayatollah Khomeini.

Hezbollah appeared and presented itself increasingly to the Shi’a popular masses as the party that continued the struggle for the Shi’a cause, which had been betrayed by Amal, and as the saviour of the violated rights of the Shi’a in the continuity of Imam Sadr. Hezbollah was also able to recruit members and supporters from wealthier layers of the Shi’a population, many of whom had lost confidence in Amal (Khatib, Matar and Alshaer 2014:50-52).

The Lebanese Civil War finally ended in 1989-1990, following the signing of the Ta’if Agreement in Saudi Arabia. The agreement reconfigured the sectarian system in the country and, as will be discussed in later chapters, codified Hezbollah’s new ascendant position within the political system. The agreement granted Hezbollah’s military wing status as a legitimate resistance force against Israel, and the organisation was permitted to keep its arms. In the same year as the Ta’if Agreement, negotiated settlements under the auspices of Iran and Syria also

endorsed the military domination of Hezbollah in Dahyeh (Chehabi 2006:229).

2.7 Conclusion

The political economy of Lebanon from the time of the French Mandate until the contemporary period has been largely characterised by its intermediary role in the regional system, dominated by banking, finance and services. Within this structure, sectarian patterns of governance have played a critical role, symbolised in the dominance of a Maronite and Sunni-linked bourgeoisie over the main levers of the country's politics and economy. Foreign actors, notably France, have encouraged these patterns of rule, forging close links with the upper layers of both the Maronite Christian and the Sunni Muslim population.

Despite its historical marginalisation, the Shi'a population has undergone significant changes since Lebanon's independence. The period prior to the Civil War witnessed a progressive change in the socio-economic status of some parts of the Shi'a, signified in the rise and formation of a new Shi'a middle class that is relatively well-educated, ambitious and seeking to challenge the peripheral position of their community. This was initially indicated in the rise of Amal and further accentuated through the 15 years of Civil War. The conflict had two main consequences for the Shi'a population: first, the political disappearance of the traditional *zu'ama* leadership of the community, who had already been significantly weakened in the years prior to the Civil War. Second, the establishment of Hezbollah in 1985. Hezbollah has since become the most prominent voice of the Shi'a population, surpassing Amal in the process. This position of prominence was reached through Hezbollah's position as a welfare and services provider to the Shi'a population, and as the main actor in the military resistance against Israel. In both cases, this was made possible through the financial support of Iran, through which Iranian capital along with the political and ideological beliefs of the Iranian Islamic Revolution were transmitted and diffused among the Shi'a.

This analysis confirms the early insights of Mehdi Amel regarding the relationship between class formation and the sectarian system in Lebanon. The deepening of

sectarian identity is a function of the political intervention of the Lebanese bourgeoisie and the Lebanese state (Amel 1986:326-327). As Amel observed, the latter is particularly important: “communities are not communities unless through and by the state... and the Lebanese state guarantees the sustainability of the dynamics that reproduce communities as political structure, which only by the state becomes institutions” (Amel 1986:29). For this reason, laws such as the electoral and personal status laws – which are regulated along religious and sectarian lines – are critical to the maintenance of sectarian identity. As Makdisi has pointed out, “to be Lebanese meant to be defined according to religious affiliation” (Makdissi 1996).

Viewed from this perspective, the Lebanese Civil War was not simply a sectarian crisis; it was, according to Amel (1986:330), a crisis of the political system in its current form, in other words as the system of the domination of the Lebanese bourgeois class. In the case of the Shi’a population, the crisis of the traditional *zu’ama* leadership began before the Civil War and became accentuated during and after the Civil War. This crisis resulted in the re-articulation of sectarian patterns of rule, firstly through the rise of Amal, and subsequently that of Hezbollah.

The other fundamental cleavage that established itself in the political and social spheres of Lebanese society since 1967 was the level of implication of Lebanon in the Arab Israeli war and the attitudes towards the Palestinian resistance. The departure of Palestinian fighters in 1982 increased the sectarianisation of the Lebanese Civil War considerably.

Amel’s perspective points to the importance of understanding the changes in the class structure of the Shi’a itself, beyond homogenising interpretations that equate sect with class. Instead, as the analysis above has confirmed, the political expression of the Shi’a community has been shaped by the on-going class differentiation within the Shi’a. This can be seen first in the rise of Amal, and then later with the formation of Hezbollah. In both cases these Islamic movements have rested upon a contradictory class base that reflects both the growth of poorer layers of Shi’a (largely dispossessed from rural areas and concentrated in the southern suburbs of Beirut) as well as their linkages to the relatively prosperous layers that emerged through the

Civil War and in the Shi'a diaspora. Hezbollah has attempted to resolve the tensions arising from this contradictory class base through its emphasis upon a sectarian and religiously-structured identity rather than any kind of consistent representation of the poorer layers of Shi'a society. This religious identity has become one of the means through which the organisation has managed to deepen its hegemony within the Shi'a population, as Chapter 5 will show in further detail.

The tensions arising from this social base of Hezbollah have been further accentuated in the neoliberal period that followed the end of the Civil War. Lebanese neoliberalism has promoted the increasing class differentiation of the Shi'a in Lebanon, and Hezbollah's response to this process has been to move closer to the interests of the emerging Shi'a bourgeoisie. The following two chapters demonstrate and analyse this trend in greater detail, and indicate their implications for Hezbollah's standing in the Shi'a population.

Chapter 3: Hezbollah and the Political Economy of Lebanese Neoliberalism

3.1 Introduction

This chapter tracks the evolution of the Lebanese political economy from the 1990s until today, with a particular focus on the attitudes, orientation and practise of Hezbollah through the period of neoliberal reform. This analysis will lay the groundwork for the following chapter, which tracks the changes in the position and stratification of the Shi'a population as a result of neoliberal policies, and the connection of these changes to the development of Hezbollah as a political organisation.

The chapter begins by analysing the economic trajectory under Rafiq Hariri, Lebanon's Prime Minister in 1992-1998 and 2000-2004. Hariri was a driving force behind the elaboration of neoliberalism in Lebanon and received little challenge from any of the country's elected political forces – including Hezbollah. Neoliberalism in Lebanon was uniquely focused upon the intersection of financial liberalisation and urban reconstruction, closely linked to the destruction of much of the country's infrastructure during the periods of Civil War and foreign invasion. Neoliberal reforms have deepened the uneven and combined development of Lebanon, producing an economy characterised by over development in the financial and service sectors, while the industrial and agricultural sectors witnessed a continuous weakening of their weight and importance. We will also see that the construction and real estate sectors have been key investment sectors in Lebanon and in the region more widely, and in which Hezbollah has developed interests. As Roccu (2012:57) has noted, this economic structure acts as a framing influence that sets the boundaries of a playing field within which political agency – in this case that of Hezbollah – develops its strategies and projects.

The second part of this chapter examines Hezbollah's orientation towards the development of Lebanese neoliberalism. Beginning with a discussion of Hezbollah's attitude towards the sectarian political system, this chapter shows how the party has

moved from a general opposition to sectarian allocation of political power towards an acceptance of the system itself. This increasing integration into political governing structures has shaped its conception of economic policy and development strategy. Along these lines, this chapter examines in depth Hezbollah's policies in three key cases: (1) municipal planning in the suburb of Ghobeyri (2) discussions around a new law to lift rent controls through 2012-2014 and (3) agricultural policy in the Bekaa Valley. These three cases are instructive examples of Hezbollah's orientation towards Lebanon's political economy precisely because they encapsulate the nexus of financial liberalisation and urban renewal (and the accompanying neglect of other sectors) that typifies Lebanese neoliberalism. Many of the narratives and conclusions drawn from these cases are based on information gathered during fieldwork for this thesis, including: interviews with Hezbollah-affiliated economic policy-makers, an important Hezbollah development think tank called the Consultative Centre for Studies and Documentation (CCSD), mayors, trade unionists and farming representatives. These cases indicate that Hezbollah has generally pursued economic policies that support those of the central government and, moreover, has done so by promoting clientelist patterns of governance that reinforce the organisation's influence over key geographical regions in Lebanon.

3.2 Neoliberalism in Lebanon

Emerging from the end of the Civil War, Lebanon's political economy was marked – as the previous chapter discussed – by a fractured sectarian system dominated by a growing Sunni bourgeoisie led by Rafiq Hariri alongside various militias that ruled over much of the country. The political arrangements codified in the Ta'if Agreement⁶⁰ entrenched this sectarianism while strengthening the position of the Sunni and Shi'a in the Lebanese political system. Political changes included the weakening of the position of President (required to be a Maronite Christian) and the commensurate increase in the Prime Minister's powers (a Sunni Muslim).⁶¹ Moreover, the ratio of Muslims to Christians in the new Lebanese Parliament rose to 6-6, up from 5-6. The term of Speaker of the Parliament, held by a Shi'a, was also

⁶⁰ The Ta'if Agreement of October 22, 1989, the fruit of a Saudi, US and Syrian agreement imposed on Lebanese deputies, confirmed Syria's dominant position in Lebanon (Salloukh 2005).

⁶¹ Under the Ta'if Agreement, the presidential office now performs a ceremonial and consultative role, with real power lying in the hands of the Prime Minister (Stewart 1996:494).

increased to four years (and constitutionally protected from being voted out during the first two years) (Traboulsi 2014:72). In addition, the Ta'if Agreement granted Syria de facto hegemony over the country, a situation that was supported by the US in 1990 following Syrian participation in the US/UN-led operation against Iraq in that year (Nizameddin 2006:95).

The Ta'if agreement was not only the basis of a new political consensus between the Lebanese elite, but also put the country on the path of neo-liberal reform. As Volker Perthes explains:

“To attract and maintain the confidence not only of local and international capital, but of its citizens, Lebanon needs to achieve substantial political consensus and national integration. In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, as Lebanon's Second Republic was formally established on the basis of the 1989 Ta'if agreement, the main approach of Lebanon's ruling elite was to produce an image of integration that would facilitate acceptance of the new order.” (Perthes 1997:19)

This ‘new order’ echoed the economic liberalisation measures that had been pursued elsewhere in the Middle East since the 1980s, with an emphasis on increased integration into the global economy and private sector growth (Baroudi 2001:71). This reform plan worked to re-establish Lebanon's financial position in the Middle East, particularly in the context of an expected increase in regional cross-border capital flows as a result of the 1992 Oslo Accords (Perthes 1997:17; Bali and Salti 2009:252).

The other important factor of Lebanon's place in the ‘New Middle East’ was the rehabilitation of infrastructure and transport (Perthes 1997:17). The government of Omar Karama (December 1990 to May 1992) began this task with the revival of the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR)⁶² and the launching of a three-

⁶² The CDR was established through Decree No. 5 dated 31st January 1977. The responsibilities of the CDR were specified to three main tasks: complying a plan and a time schedule for the resumption of reconstruction and of development, guaranteeing the funding of projects presented and supervising their execution and utilization by contributing to the process of rehabilitation of public institutions, thus enabling it to assume

year plan, the National Emergency Reconstruction Program (NERP), at a World Bank-sponsored donor meeting held in Paris in December 1991 (Sherry 2014). During this initial phase of reconstruction, however, as Hassan Sherry (2014) has observed, “regional political complexities, along with a lack of commitment on the side of the Lebanese government to engage in a full-fledged economic reconstruction reform program, prompted the failure of the NERP”.

Despite this initial ‘failure’, reconstruction plans began to take significant steps forward following Rafiq Hariri’s accession to the Prime Ministership in 1992. As a wealthy businessman benefiting from regional and international support, Hariri’s appointment occurred in the wake of the strikes and demonstrations that swept the Karama government, and then forced the departure of the Solh government (May 1992 to October 1992).⁶³ Hariri had deep connections with the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and had amassed a large fortune in the Saudi construction and public works sector. By the 1970s, he had become one of the Saudi royal family’s most important and trusted businessmen, even obtaining Saudi citizenship (ICG 2010:2). Entering domestic Lebanese politics in 1983, Hariri became a political adviser to Saudi Prince Bandar Bin Sultan, the then Saudi Ambassador to the U.S. (Mehio 2002), and Saoud Al-Faysal, the Saudi foreign minister. In 1983 and 1984, during mediation efforts in Geneva and Lausanne between representatives of the major Lebanese factions for a national dialogue conference, he was Riyadh’s official envoy to Lebanon. He also laid the groundwork that led to the 1989 Ta’if Accord. Throughout this period, Hariri developed ties with other key decision makers in Lebanon, including the governments of Syria, France and the United States. In Lebanon itself, he established an independent network of services and charitable activities, including the provision of education, healthcare, jobs, food and financial aid, targeting mainly Sunni but benefiting other communities as well (ICG 2010:2). This business network gave him an important social base in the country’s predominantly clientelist system.

Hariri’s vision for Lebanon’s political economy was centred upon the liberalisation of capital flows and deregulation of the tax system as means to entice foreign capital to

responsibility for the execution of a number of projects under the supervision of the Council of Ministers (CDR 2014).

⁶³ These protests were particularly concerned with deteriorating living conditions caused by the rapid rise of the U.S. dollar against the Lebanese Pound.

invest in economic infrastructure (ICG 2010:3; Young 1998:5).⁶⁴ In this context, the character of neoliberalism in Lebanon was heavily oriented towards opening up the economy to foreign investment flows, primarily aimed at the banking, financial and real estate sectors, further deepening the heavily financialised nature of the Lebanese economy.

Politically, Hariri's rule was characterised by:

“The support of the Syrian regime, which handed him control of the economy, outsourced the anti-Israeli resistance to Hezbollah and left politics and security in the hands of General Ghazi Kanaan, Syria's High Commissioner in Lebanon. Secondly, Hariri had the cooperation of militia leaders and those who had accumulated their wealth from War and emigration, and was surrounded by associates, party members and security officials, who covered the entire political spectrum... in addition to a large coterie of technocrats and lawyers, graduates of international financial institutions and private companies. One of the most noteworthy measures he took to entrench his power was his indefatigable and costly effort to gain control of the media.” (Traboulsi 2014:23)⁶⁵

Hariri's economic agenda was financed by both his personal fortune and his international contacts.

The main outlines of the Hariri government's reconstruction plan were detailed in a document entitled *Horizon 2000, for Reconstruction and Development*, a sectoral and regional expenditure program of \$14.3 billion that extended over the period from 1993 to 2002. In 1994, the budget of the program was raised to \$18 billion over a 13 years period stretching from 1995 to 2007 (Makdissi 2004:119). The geographic distribution of reconstruction funding was characterised by the same regional

⁶⁴ This orientation was partly predicated on a belief that a regional peace agreement would be reached by 1996.

⁶⁵ Dr. Hassan Fadlallah, Hezbollah MP, wrote in his book “Hizb Allâh wa al-Dawla fî Lubnân – al-ru'yya wa al-massâr” that Ghazi Kanaan was the de facto ruler of Lebanon in the nineties (2014 cited in Bassam 2014).

inequalities as before the Civil War, with the bulk of investments concentrated in Beirut and Mount Lebanon – around 80 percent of the total – and the remainder outside of these areas. These projects were marked by the blurring of lines between public and private property and helped to consolidate Hariri's increasing political and financial power. The best example of this is the case of the private company Solidere, in which the Hariri family was the major shareholder and the driving force in the company's lobbying. The Solidere Company was given exclusive rights to rehabilitate infrastructure and develop the downtown business area in Beirut, and was accused by property owners of forcibly purchasing their properties at less than their market value (Makdissi 2004:83).

In practice, implementation of the reconstruction plan led to a large increase in government expenditure and a concomitant rise in debt levels. The ratio between government expenditure and domestic revenue was 150 percent in 1995, and grew to 233 percent in 2002 (Makdissi 2004:83). Alongside reconstruction expenditure, government spending between 1993 and 2005 was taken up in repaying interest on public debt (38 percent) and the wage bill (29 percent) (Gaspart 2004:217). Privatisation was also launched in this period, including: the entry of two private mobile phone companies, Libancell and Cellis, the first steps towards the privatisation of the postal service (Gaspart 2004:72) and the contracting out of garbage collection in greater Beirut to a private company called Sukleen. Private companies were granted a monopoly on the import of oil and airport and port operations (Catusse 2000). Furthermore, the government signed an agreement with the World Bank (WB) in 1996 committing the Lebanese authorities to privatise the electricity sector. Focusing on these liberalisation measures, successive governments failed to tackle other economic and social problems such as unemployment, low wages, poverty (particularly in the regions of the Akkar and the Bekaa Valley), increasing corruption and the poor quality of social services (Baroudi 2002:64).

By the late 1990s and early 2000s, a new set of neoliberal policies was put in place to address the heavy fiscal burden of rising public debt and a relatively high debt service. Beginning in 1996, government wages were frozen and automatic wage increases were ended; real wages thus tended to decline significantly due to rising

inflation (prices increased by about 120 percent from 1996 to 2011) (Zaraket 2014).⁶⁶ At the same time, increasing levels of foreign debt were accumulated (Baroudi 2002:68). In 2002, the public debt reached 173 percent of GDP, while the payment of the debt represented 18 percent of the GDP, which amounted to 80 percent of the budget income (Nasnas 2007:86).

Privatisation was accelerated in the early 2000s with a new law, which established a Higher Privatization Council that aimed at the further sell off of public sector enterprises (Makdissi 2004:121; Nasnas 2007:90). During this period, the reorganisation of the state TV station and Middle East Airlines (MEA) was carried out, leading to the lay-off of 2,000 employees (Makdissi 2004:121; Nasnas 2007:87). In addition, a new VAT of 10 percent was introduced on goods and services. Moreover, the government in 2001 reduced the share paid by employers to the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) from 38.5 percent to 23.5 percent.⁶⁷ As part of the Hariri government's attempt to encourage Foreign Direct Investments (FDI), a new law on investments was adopted in 2001 that established a "One stop shop" for private investors (Nasnas 2007:87). Another law aimed at attracting "bien fonds", or property funds, by lifting restrictions on property ownership and setting taxes for foreign investors at the same level as Lebanese citizens.

These measures did little to reduce the public debt or revitalise the economy. The need for further external support led to the Paris I Conference on February 23, 2001, which was organised with the support of international institutions such as the WB, European Investment Bank, and the European Commission. At this meeting, 500 million Euros were provided to Lebanon in accordance with pledges by the Lebanese government to stimulate the economy by liberalizing and facilitating trade, containing public expenditure – including cutting subsidies on some food products –, privatisation (in the telecommunications, water and electricity sectors), attracting FDI and modernising the tax system (Sherry 2014).

⁶⁶ In 2008, a decree was passed increasing wages by 200,000 LP (\$133) for the private sector, but it only benefited the private sector and not the employees of the public sector as the state Shura Council overturned the decree in 2011, citing its illegality (Zaraket 2014).

⁶⁷ The NSSF provides employees with insurance coverage for sickness and maternity care and it also covers family allowances, end of service pensions and work related accidents and diseases (Nasnas 2007:90).

A further meeting was called in Paris by then French president Jacques Chirac in November 2002. In preparation for this conference, the government put forward a budget for 2003 that incorporated further expenditure cuts and revenue enhancing measures, including new taxes and fees. The measures envisioned in the document submitted to the Paris II conference planned to fully privatise the cellular phone system and energy sectors, and to transform the fixed phone system and power sectors into commercial entities (Makdissi 2004:122). At this conference, donor countries and institutions finally provided a total package of financial and developmental assistance of \$4.4 billion. The IMF was also given an important role in supervising financial assistance and the implementation of neoliberal measures in the country. In 2004 and 2005, the privatisation of the water sector, ports and airports through concession arrangements was agreed (Nasnas 2007:96).

These plans were disrupted following the assassination of Rafiq Hariri on February 14 2005, which was followed by the Israeli war on Lebanon in the summer of 2006. The Israeli attack resulted in the death of more than 1,100 people, the displacement of over a quarter of the population, and an estimated \$2.8 billion in direct costs with more than 60 percent of the damage affecting the housing sector (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2009:42). This crisis was further reinforced by political instability that followed the resignation of Hezbollah ministers and their allies from the government in November 2006.⁶⁸

In the wake of the war, the WB carried out an Economic and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) at the request of the Lebanese government. The ESIA's mission was to assess the challenges facing the economy, determine the impact of the 2006 hostilities and to suggest appropriate reforms that should be undertaken (Bank Information Center (BIC) 2012:15). In September of 2006, the WB Board of Governors approved a grant of \$70 million for a Trust Fund of which a part went to the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private sector arm of the WB Group. The IFC, in close cooperation with the government, was tasked with preparing a

⁶⁸ On November 11 2006, two Hezbollah ministers, in addition to three others (two from Amal's movement and one independent) resigned from Siniora's government, protesting what Hezbollah described as a lack of "power sharing". Hezbollah was demanding a national unity government in which it would hold with its allies at least one-third – plus one – of the total cabinet seats. This is known as the blocking third, which would enable it to veto any important decisions, such as vetoing the upcoming budget on the international tribunal on the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, which it opposed.

programme to rehabilitate Lebanon's private sector focusing, among other elements, on small and medium enterprises and the removal of administrative barriers to private sector activity. Partly in response to this external pressure, the parliament adopted a plan put forward by the Prime Minister Siniora on January 4 2007, which aimed to bring the debt down from 180 percent to 144 percent of the GDP by 2011, increase VAT from 10 percent to 15 percent, privatise the mobile telephone sector, eliminate the budget deficit in five years and adopt other initiatives to attract foreign investors (Vivien 2007).

At the Paris III Conference on Assistance to Lebanon on January 25 2007, the international community pledged \$7.6 billion in financial assistance in the form of loans and grants to the Lebanese government. The bulk of these loans, especially those provided by international institutions such as the WB and IMF, were accompanied by strict conditionality and were based on the implementation of the reforms announced by the Prime Minister Siniora at the beginning of the month.

Nevertheless, because of internal political conflict, a number of privatisation processes were delayed.

3.3 Social Outcomes of Neoliberalism in Lebanon

By the end of the first decade of the 2000s, the political economy of Lebanon was marked by the highly polarised outcomes of neoliberal reform. In 2008, it was estimated that 28 percent of the population was categorised as poor and living on US \$4/day or less (the upper poverty line), while eight percent were extremely poor, living on US \$2.4/day or less (the lower poverty line) (UNDP 2008a:11). Unemployment levels were also significant, with only an estimated one-third of the working age population actually in employment (UNDP 2008a:14). Between 40 percent and 50 percent of Lebanese residents did not have access to the NSSF or any other public social security. Temporary foreign workers, whose numbers are estimated to reach more than one million, lacked all social protection.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ These workers come mostly from Syria, Egypt, South East Asia and more recently the Horn of Africa. Syrians work mostly in construction and agriculture, while those from South East Asia are predominant in domestic work (Catusse and Abi Yaghi 2011:77).

Alongside this widespread poverty, inequality levels remained extremely high. The richest 20 percent of the population received 43.55 percent of the national income between 2004 and 2005, while the poorest 20 percent received 7.07 percent (UNDP 2009:63). It has been estimated that only 800 bank accounts, belonging to less than 200 families, contained approximately 20 percent of total deposits worth nearly \$14 billion in 2007. Credit Suisse's Global Wealth Databook 2013 notes that at least 48 percent of Lebanon's privately-held wealth is held by some 8,900 citizens, just 0.3 percent of the adult population (Credit Suisse 2013 cited in Executive Magazine 2013). In this context, ownership and control of capital is highly concentrated, with half of Lebanon's domestic markets considered oligopolistic to monopolistic and a third dominated by a single firm with a market share above 40 percent (Ministry of Economy and Trade (Lebanon) 2003 cited in Berthélemy, Dessus and Nahas 2007:4). The banking sector, which had a size equivalent to 350 percent of GDP in 2009 (The Daily Star 2010) is particularly marked by concentration of ownership – five banks controlled (Bank Audi, Blom Bank, Byblos Bank, Fransabank and BankMed) about half the volume of total deposits in 2002 (Gaspard 2004:194).

These pronounced levels of inequality are closely related to the rentier and financialised nature of the economy, which has been reinforced by the neoliberal measures outlined above. Wages and social contributions, for example, accounted for only 23 percent of GDP in 2009, while the share of interest payments accounted for 10 percent of GDP or a third of government expenditures in 2011 (Matabadal 2012:5). As the purchasing power of Lebanese citizens decreased due to rising inflation, the importance of rent derived from interest was accentuated through policies that encouraged banks and high-income earners to purchase Lebanese treasury bills with high interest rates. In 2002, when the general debt reached \$30 billion, \$22 billion went to the banks in the form of interest on Treasury bonds (Traboulsi 2014:25).⁷⁰ The banking sector benefited particularly from these policies, increasing its capital from \$103 billion to \$966 billion between 1990 and 2007, with deposits growing from \$6.6 billion in 1992 to \$58 billion in 2005 (Traboulsi 2014:25).

⁷⁰ In the end of 2013, the Gross Public Debt reached \$63.46 billion, representing 140 percent of the GDP while the payment of the interests of the debt represented 40 percent of the total revenues and 28 percent of the total expenditures. (Republic of Lebanon, Ministry of Finance 2013b:1). Between 1993 and 2008, Lebanon paid \$38 billion on debt, which reached an average of \$9,000 per person (Traboulsi 2014:25).

In the context of rising prices and constant wages, increases in output and productivity have flowed to employer profits; from 1997 to 2012, around \$30 billion was transferred from salaries into returns on capital (Dibeh 2013). Indeed, despite the increase in actual output by 50 percent and actual productivity by 75 percent since 1996, the share of wages declined by 35 percent in 1997 (Dibeh 2013). This meant that those increases contributed to an increase in the share of profits, rents and interests, which amounted to 75 percent of GDP (Dibeh 2013). As economist Ghassan Dibeh (2013) has noted, “due to the regressive tax system, the lower strata of society had to endure the brunt of the impact [of inflation and low wages]. This led to the transfer of wealth from taxpayers to debt holders, which led to the deepening of the rentier economy”.

The rentier features of the economy are also indicated by the weight of the service sector, which made up 79-81 percent of GDP in 2010, while agriculture and industry constituted 5.1 percent and 13-15.9 percent respectively (BIC 2012:6). Services hold around 60 percent of the total labour force (Nasr 2003:153),⁷¹ while the industrial sector accounted for 15 percent, construction 8.6 percent and agriculture 7.6 percent in 2007 (UNDP 2008a:143).⁷² This weakness in the productive sectors is reflected in the dependence on foreign capital inflows and remittances from the Lebanese diaspora. The share of FDI in GDP reached 15 percent in 2009, and was mostly concentrated in real estate and tourism-related investment (70 percent and 22 percent respectively of total inflows) (Investment Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL) 2011:14). Another significant source of foreign capital came from Lebanese expatriates, with remittances constituting 22 percent of GDP in 2011 (\$7.6 billion)

⁷¹ Moreover, Lebanese banks employ currently close to 21,337 employees throughout the country, amounting to 1.2 percent of the total labour force.

⁷² Lebanon's industrial sector was made up 4,033 establishments (with 5 workers and more) in 2007. There is a sharp division between a large number of very small firms (78.2 percent of all Lebanese industrial enterprises employed between 5 and 19 workers in 2007) and a handful of large ones (3 percent had more than 100 workers). Large industries employing more than 50 workers represented 7.1 percent of total establishments but employed more than 45 percent of the workforce, while medium size establishments (from 20 to 49 workers) represented 14.8 percent of total establishments and 21.1 percent of the total workforce (Republic of Lebanon, the Ministry of Industry, United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), Association of Lebanese Industrialists (ALI) 2007). In agriculture, 5 percent of the farmers' control 47 percent of the total cultivated lands, while half of the farmers own only 8 percent of the total cultivated lands (Nasr 2003).

The state is also a major employer as political parties often use the availability of jobs in public administration for clientelist purposes. The number of state employees increased from 75,000 in 1974 to 175,000 in 2000, or from 9 percent to 12-14 percent of the total labour force (Nasr 2003:153).

(The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the World Bank 2011:14).

The implications of these processes for the relative balance of different regions and – in a closely-related sense – the economic weight of Lebanon’s sectarian communities, will be explored in the following chapter. I will show that one of the main outcomes was the promotion of a number of newly emergent groups in Lebanon that came to rival the commercial and financial bourgeoisie, who had left during the course of the Civil War. As a result, a new bourgeoisie formed through the fusion of different sections of capital: wealthy “Gulf entrepreneurs” who amassed large fortunes in the Gulf (the most prominent being Rafiq Hariri), rich émigrés returning to the country (especially Shi’a from West Africa), and some war profiteers and new wealthy layers who were associated with the militias (Nasr 2003:151). At this stage, however, it is necessary to turn to Hezbollah’s response to these policies at both the political and economic level.

3.4 Hezbollah's Changing Attitude towards the Sectarian State

One of the striking features of Hezbollah’s evolution through the neoliberal period is its changing attitude towards sectarianism and its growing integration into the structures of the state. In its early days, the party was highly critical of the existing political system and the entrenched privileges of both Maronite and Sunni political classes. The 1985 founding manifesto of the party noted that the existing political system and its sectarian privileges was the root cause of Lebanon’s problems (Al-rissâla al-maftûha allatî wajjahaha “Hizb Allâh” ila al-mustad’afîn 1985). As an alternative, Hezbollah advocated an Islamic form of government in the framework of Ayatollah Khomeini’s vision of *Wilâyat al-Faqîh*, stating the movement’s belief in Khomeini as the “single wise and just leader” (Al-rissâla al-maftûha allatî wajjahaha “Hizb Allâh” ila al-mustad’afîn 1985). Despite this call for a theocratic state, the party was nevertheless aware of the concerns that many Lebanese might have, adding that its foundation would only be possible “on the basis of free and direct selection of the people, not the basis of forceful imposition, as some people imagine” (Al-rissâla al-maftûha allatî wajjahaha “Hizb Allâh” ila al-mustad’afîn 1985).

This initial position against the sectarian status quo began to change following Hezbollah's acceptance of the 1989 Ta'if agreement. While Hezbollah would note that Ta'if failed to eliminate the shortcomings of the old system in stating that it "maintains the Maronite system and reinforces the Israeli occupation" (Al-Ahed 1989 cited in Khatib, Matar and Alshaer 2014:57), it began to emphasize the importance of civil peace and state reconstruction rather than any fundamental change in the system. This acceptance was partly due to the organisation's greater weight in the political process – codified in the Ta'if Agreement – as well as its official recognition as a resistance movement that allowed it to remain armed while other militias were disarmed (Zigby 2000:41).

The party was also affected by the changes in the IRI, its main political, military and economic ally. It signed the Ta'if agreement only after it had received permission from the Iranian government (Khatib, Matar and Alshaer 2014:57). The end of the Iraq-Iran war and the death of Khomeini led to a more pragmatic foreign policy in the IRI. The Iranian leadership, led by its new president Rafsandjani and the new Supreme Leader Khomeini, was more preoccupied by socio-economic problems in Iran, and the rise of the USA as a single great power following the demise of the USSR. The Iranian leadership was therefore trying to adjust its policies in accordance with the new unipolar balance of power (Rakel 2009:117-118).

Since this period, the IRI witnessed improvements in diplomatic relations with the monarchies of the Gulf, the European Union, China, India, central Eurasia, Russia and the United States, while the main currents arguing for the "Export of the Revolution" lost influence in the highest echelon of the state (Rakel 2009:113). This was represented in 1989 first by Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri's fall from favour, who had been the designated successor of Khomeini for years, (a few months before the death of Ayatollah Khomeini after he protested against the liquidation of 30,000 members of the People's Mujahidin) and secondly of Ali Akbar Mohtachemi who was no longer Minister of Interior (Daher 2014:117). The "revolutionary" tendency was sidelined in the IRI.

At the same time, this evolution in the Iranian political sphere was accompanied by a policy of socio-economic liberalization, which included invitations to Iranian investors

and managers that had left the country during the Iraq-Iran war to return to their country (Tehrani 1993:354). This economic opening was reflected by Rafsandjani's speech during a Friday Prayer in October 1990, in which he advised Iranian Muslims to try to live well and even urged that "Friday Prayer is an occasion for Muslims to display their wealth" (Rajaei 1993:118).

The pragmatic turn of the Iranian leadership, and the end of the willingness to export the "revolution" at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, pushed Hezbollah to attenuate and even cease its rejection of the Lebanese political system and seek increasing integration.

The election of Abbas Al-Mussawi in May 1991 as Secretary General, instead of Tufayli, represented this evolution. The election of Hassan Nasrallah as Secretary General, following Al-Mussawi's assassination in 1992 by the Israeli army, confirmed the path of "*infitâh*" (opening). Tufayli was considered to be too close to the currents of the "Export of the Revolution" camp. Others in this camp, such as Ali Akbar Mohtachami, were no longer welcome by the Iranian leadership, led by Rafsandjani and Khameni. Al-Mussawi and Hassan Nasrallah were considered to be ideologically close to the latter currents and had a more conciliatory attitude toward integration in the Lebanese political system (Daher 2008:273-274). It was in this period that the last western hostages were released and the Islamic movement allowed the army to deploy to their strongholds in the Iqlim Al-Touffah, region of South Lebanon (Blanford 2011:95).

Moreover, the increasing political and military domination of Lebanon by Syria, the intermediary through which arms and Iranian aids had to go through, also played a role in pushing for Hezbollah's integration into the Lebanese political system (Blanford 2011:95). Hezbollah had to take into consideration the Syrian regime's interests because of its domination over Lebanon and its position of intermediary for the weapons transfer from Iran. Therefore, they also accommodated Syria's use of the Islamic movement against Israel to serve its own geopolitical calculations and diplomacy in any prospective Arab-Israeli peace negotiations (Salloukh 2012:100).

Iran and Hezbollah nevertheless continued to have a strong relation throughout the

1990s. The link between Khamenei and Hezbollah was strengthened and formalized, as the Iranian Supreme Leader was adopted as their marja' by the party in 1995, and Hassan Nasrallah and Muhammad Yazbeck were designated in 2000 as his representatives in Lebanon (Mervin 2008a:83).

In this context, Hezbollah's participation in the 1992 legislative elections provoked a range of heated debates within the organisation, with two schools of thought emerging. A very small minority within Hezbollah, led by the ex Secretary General *Sheikh* Tufayli, opposed any integration into the political system,⁷³ while the bulk of the leadership argued for a more pragmatic orientation (Blanford and Bourday 2007). Eventually the matter was submitted to Ayatollah Khomeini for judgement, who issued a fatwa supporting the decision of the majority of the leadership to participate in the elections (Khatib 2014:24). Tufayli also distanced himself further from the leadership by attacking it for being "subordinate to the Christians" over its decision in 1995 to back the extension of President Elias Hrawi's Mandate (Yehia 1998).

Growing disagreements between Hezbollah and Tufayli gradually appeared between the two actors, especially following the 1996 "Hunger's Revolt" in the Bekaa and the call to overthrow the government in 1997. Tufayli was definitively expelled from the Islamic movement after he organised a separate demonstration from Hezbollah's official march on Jerusalem Day in 1998 (Harb 2010:195; Daher 2008:274-275). The reasons for Tufayli's increasing defiance through the years towards the leadership of the Islamic movement are various, ranging from the refusal to accept his sidelining from leadership to his competition over control of the Bekaa (Daher 2008:274). He later became one of the most outspoken critics of Hezbollah and the leadership of the IRI, accusing both of corruption and of selling out the ideals of Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution adding that "Hezbollah is no longer a real liberation force but just a tool for Iranian interests" (Blanford and Bourday 2007).

The Tufayli episode did not stop Hezbollah's leadership policy of "*Infitâh*" and the Islamic movement has participated in all parliamentary and municipal elections since then. From 1992 to 2009, the party controlled the largest legislative blocs in the

⁷³ Tufayli declared that the move ran contrary to Islam, which forbids participation in a political system that oppresses people (Yehia 1998).

National Assembly. Their elected positions were 12 seats (in 1992), 10 (1996), 12 (2000), 14 (2004), 11 (2005), and 12 (2009) out of a total of 128 seats. In the various municipal elections, Hezbollah has also demonstrated its popularity, winning 87 municipalities out of 142 in the South (61.2 percent), 36 municipalities out of 38 in the Bekaa and all of the six municipalities in the suburbs of Beirut (100 percent) in 2000 (Hamzeh 2004:132-133).

This period of “Infitâh” was also characterised by growing collaboration between Hezbollah and the Syrian-backed Lebanese Army and its security agencies, particularly following the election of General Emile Lahoud, former commander of the army, as President of Lebanon in 1998. This relationship was further cemented following the nomination of Maj. Gen. Jamil Al-Sayyid to the leadership of General Security. This position had traditionally been reserved for a Maronite, but shifted to Shi’a control in 1998 after then-President Lahoud appointed Al-Sayyid, his long-term army colleague (Hodeib 2013b). In the words of Abd Al-Halim Fadlallah (2012a), director of the Hezbollah think tank CCSD, Emile Lahoud’s arrival to power in 1998 began an alliance with the state on a strategic level regarding the resistance.⁷⁴ Dr. Hassan Fadlallah, Hezbollah MP, also confirms the role of Emile Lahoud in strengthening the collaboration between the leadership of the army and Hezbollah, describing the latter as a partner of the resistance (Fadlallah 2014 cited in Bassam 2014; Nassif 2014).⁷⁵

In addition to this, a number of analysts have pointed out the presence of Hezbollah in the state structure, securing especially key positions in the security apparatus: the military tribunal, general security and airport security. Several critical army posts are currently headed by individuals with ties to Hezbollah or its allies (ICG 2014:13), and

⁷⁴ Hezbollah actually voted in August 2004 in favour of the amendment of the constitution, under the Syrian’s regime imposition, in order to allow for President Emile Lahoud to extend his Mandate for an additional 3 years.

⁷⁵ The close collaboration between the Lebanese army and Hezbollah was witnessed again in June 2013 in the military seizure of the mosque and the security compound of the Salafist cleric *Sheikh* Ahmad Al-Assir in Saida, following the attack by its followers of a Lebanese army checkpoint, killing 16 soldiers and wounding 35. Reports emerged of Hezbollah’s role alongside the army in the fight against Al-Assir’s loyalists. On June 24 2013, Manar TV showed live footage of uniformed soldiers arresting Assir fighters and chanting ‘Ya Zeinab’, a Shi’a religious cry. Future Television, owned by Hariri, showed video footage of fighters in the battle area wearing yellow armbands, presumably identifying themselves as Hezbollah. Some journalists (McClatchy and Yahoo) reported speaking to Hezbollah fighters on the ground and eyewitnesses who attested to the party’s role in the battle (Khoury 2013a). Again in mid September 2014, Shi’a residents of the northern Bekaa Valley stated that Hezbollah assisted the Lebanese army in firing mortar rounds and artillery rockets at the jihadists in the mountains outside Ersal (Blanford 2014b).

the General Security Director of the Interior Ministry (one of the two state security agencies) General Maj. Gen. Abbas Ibrahim, and the head of security at Beirut's airport, Wafiq Shuqayr, are known to be close to Hezbollah (Khoury 2013a and ICG 2008:3).⁷⁶⁷⁷

This gradual acceptance of the political sectarian system was reflected in the new Manifesto of the party in 2009. Although it confirmed the position of the 1985 manifesto, that political sectarianism was a major problem “which thwarts Lebanon’s reform and development” (Manifesto 2009), the new manifesto postponed any change to the system until a non-determined future date. Until that point “homogenous democracy” – a term used to describe the sectarian system – would remain “the fundamental basis for governance in Lebanon, because it is the actual quintessence of the spirit of the constitution and the core of the Charter of the co-existence” (Manifesto 2009, Section 3: State and Political System). In this contradictory sense, political sectarianism was described negatively but the sectarian system itself was upheld as the basis of co-existence. Previous to the Manifesto, Naim Qassem expressed a nearly similar position in his book declaring that “the suppression of political sectarianism was the best and healthiest way to alleviate the burden of the confessional system in Lebanon”, but at the same time “there is a need of an objective and calm debate, based on proofs and dialogue, to elaborate an adapted project and its mechanism of implementation, even on the long term” (cited in Qassem 2008:287).

Likewise, Abd Al-Halim Fadlallah, the director of Hezbollah’s development think tank, the CCSD, has argued that the Lebanese sectarian system allowed a sectarian balance in political representation, adding that the nominations of senior officials

⁷⁶ The General Security Director is also the one to decide the censorship of movies and on numerous occasions Iranian movies critical of the IRI were banned in Lebanon. For example the previous General Security Director Wafic Jezzini (2005-2010) had censored first the movie *Perspepolis* because it was considered by the censorship authority as “offensive to Muslims and to Iran” although he reversed his decision after strong opposition (The Daily Star 2008). Maj. Gen. Abbas Ibrahim censored in 2011 the Iranian film “Green Days,” which dealt with protests against the 2009 re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and in November 2014 the movie “The Silent Majority Speaks”, which focuses on the 2009 “Green Movement”, was also banned. In these two cases, the censorship authority deemed these movies as insults “to a foreign country”, in other words the IRI (The Daily Star 2014c).

⁷⁷ The Lebanese Army Intelligence is identified as cooperating with Hezbollah and the Amal Movement, while the Information Branch, the intelligence arm of the Internal Security Forces (ISF), is seen as being connected with the Future Movement and the March 14 alliance.

should continue to respect this balance, while at the lower levels the cancellation of administrative sectarianism could be discussed (Fadlallah 2010). In an interview for this thesis, Fadlallah stated that Hezbollah took a tactical position towards the sectarian system, considering that it was now possible to change the system slowly from within through reforms (Fadlallah 2012a). Only through a consensus of Lebanese political parties could a solution be achieved, argued Fadlallah, adding that Hezbollah could not ignore the fears of the Christian community regarding the end of the sectarian political system (Fadlallah 2012a). Similarly, this rather unclear position was reflected in the debate around the proposal for the formation of a national committee to discuss the elimination of sectarianism made by Nabih Berry, head of the Amal movement and Chair of the Lebanese Parliament since 1992, in which Nasrallah, who supported this initiative, argued that “this committee or body may continue its dialogue for five, ten, twenty or even thirty years” (cited in Shapira 2009).

Hezbollah suspiciously viewed attempts to challenge the sectarian system from outside the parliament. Hezbollah did not participate or mobilize its members to demonstrate in the demonstrations of the beginning of 2011, calling for an end of the sectarian regime that started in February 2011 and which gathered more than 3,000 people. The mobilisation then grew to 10,000 and 25,000 people on 6 and 20 March demonstrations respectively. Its organisers included leftist and secularist political groups, NGOs, gender and sexual preference collectives and many independent activists (Abi Yaghi 2012). On the contrary, Hezbollah, as well as other political forces, warned their members not to participate (Chiit 2011; Daou 2011). The Islamic movement also did not participate in the protest that gathered around 300 participants outside the parliament to protest against the ‘Orthodox law’ on February 19, 2013 (Al-Akhbar English 2013b). The electoral “Orthodox Gathering” Law, which was promoted by Hezbollah ally the FPM and endorsed by all of Lebanon’s Maronite leaders, entrenched Lebanon even further into sectarianism by allowing voters to vote for candidates that were exclusively from their confession (Nakbi 2011). At that time, Hezbollah, although supporting officially and rhetorically an electoral law based on a single constituency and proportional representation that maintains the same sectarian representation (Qassem 2008:260; Fadlallah 2010; Fadlallah 2012b; Orient Le Jour 2012b), supported and voted in favour of the electoral “Orthodox Gathering” Law in joint parliamentary committees (Orient Le Jour 2013a). The law was

nevertheless finally abandoned.

Hezbollah went from being a radical anti-systemic party in the 1980s to a party participating at all levels of the Lebanese political system. This is not in contradiction with the fact that Hezbollah never stopped declaring that an Islamic state was its preferred option. Hassan Nasrallah declared in 1994:

"The solution, in our opinion, is the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon and beyond...I cannot honestly say I do not advocate an Islamic state...but I do not wish [to impose this] by force or violence, rather we prefer to wait for the day that we succeed in convincing our countrymen – by means of dialogue and in an open atmosphere – that the only alternative is the founding of an Islamic state". (Al-Ahed 1994 cited in Wörn 2012:23)

In 2004, Hezbollah's declaration "Identity and Goals" stated that one of its ideals is the establishment of a "pure" Islamic state (cited in Alagha 2006:245-246). The Vice President of the party Naim Qassem (2008:47) has also written in his book that the preferred option for Hezbollah is an Islamic state, as stated in the Manifesto of 1985, but this should not be imposed against the will of the population and therefore is not an option today in Lebanon as a majority would refuse it. Hezbollah's leadership has indeed been keen to stress that this objective was not a practical option in the near future given Lebanon's confessional and sectarian make up. In addition, no mention of establishing an Islamic state was made in the municipal and parliamentary elections programmes since 1992 (Alagha 2007:104). Despite the absence of the establishment of an Islamic state in the Manifesto of 2009, this remains a fundamental and founding principle of Hezbollah. Nasrallah actually admitted during the presentation of the new Manifesto that it was essentially a "political document", which did not touch on "matters of creed, ideology or thought" (cited in Blanford 2011:480). He said for example that the Islamic movement's view on the *Wilâyat al-Faqîh* "is not a political stand that can be subjected to revision" (cited in Blanford 2011:480).

Hezbollah's downplaying of the enforcement of an Islamic state has not prevented the Islamic movement from opposing several propositions regarding the secularization of the state. Hezbollah has indeed declared its opposition to any kind of possible personal status civil law alongside Islamic Status law, and declared such propositions as being anti-Islamic (Qassem 2008:288 and Orient Le Jour 2011b). Qassem, for example, considers that the Islamic status law governs the social relationship between spouses, children, divorce, inheritance and all the elements of marital life. He adds that "it's a divine law, and what has been authorised by God cannot be forbidden by anyone, and what has been forbidden by God cannot be authorised by anyone" (Qassem 2008:288). *Sheikh* Naim Qassem said that the personal status among Muslims in particular "does not constitute a material idea, but is an integral part of faith, creed, religion and commitment" (cited in Orient Le Jour 2011b). He added that any attempt to go against the (religious community) status is religiously prohibited. The head of the Sharia commission within Hezbollah, *Sheikh* Muhammad Yazbeck (Orient Le Jour 2011b), followed the same logic saying that the solution is not, as some proclaim, "to separate the state from religion".

This evolution of Hezbollah's position towards the political system has important implications for the party's relationship to Lebanese neoliberalism. Most particularly, its increasing participation at all levels of the political system since 1992, including national and municipal administrative bodies, has meant that the party has become directly responsible for implementing many of the reforms advocated by the Lebanese elite and international institutions. Even whilst in opposition, the party has increasingly subordinated opposition to these reforms to its growing interests within the political system. The tensions this has generated within the organisation can be seen through a closer examination of Hezbollah's economic programme.

In addition to the formal role that Hezbollah plays in Lebanon's political economy, its integration into the system has also encouraged forms of clientelism and corruption. Even close allies of Hezbollah have raised this issue. Ziad Abs (Orient Le Jour 2012c), for example, a member of the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) and one of the main actors behind the Memorandum of Understanding between Hezbollah and the FPM, has criticized the fact that "it is in Hezbollah controlled regions, such as the southern suburbs, that we saw the development of mafias of motors, of forgery

networks, kidnapping for ransom and taxes collected illegally on certain businesses". In 2010, Hezbollah was faced by a huge internal corruption scandal following the collapse of a pyramid scheme allegedly led by one of the richest men in the South of Lebanon, Salah Ezzedine. Ezzedine had close ties to the party and its leadership. He owned the Dar al-Hadi publishing house, which handles many of Hezbollah's publications and is named after Nasrallah's son who was killed in 1997 in battle against Israel (Blanford 2011:475). The collapse of Ezzedine resulted in the loss of \$300 million to \$1 billion for some 10,000 Lebanese Shi'a. After the collapse, Ezzedine was dubbed the "Lebanese Bernie Madoff" by Lebanese newspapers, while bankers declared that it was the biggest fraud of its kind the country had ever seen (The Star 2009; Worth 2009; Hersh 2010). More recently, Hezbollah has been accused of importing hundreds of untested medications into the country. Those involved include Abdul Latif Fneish, the brother of Hezbollah Minister Muhammad Fneish, and four companies linked to the organisation (Kraiche 2012; Now Lebanon 2012; Orient Le Jour 2012d; El-Cheikh and Saghyieh 2013a).

Journalist Nicolas Blanford was reporting at the beginning of 2015 increasing allegations of corruption within Hezbollah following the decline of financial assistance from the IRI to Hezbollah because of falling oil revenues and the consequences of international sanctions against Iran. He wrote that the Hezbollah-run Rassul al-Azzam hospital in Beirut's southern suburbs, which has treated hundreds of casualties evacuated from Syrian battlefields, started to pay its suppliers every six months, instead of every three months, and with an Iranian official flying in specially to handle the transfers so as to prevent pilfering (Blanford 2015). Hezbollah has also been accused of being involved in illegal transnational activities as a source of funding for the Islamic movement such as: bank frauds, currency counterfeiting, drug trafficking, the manufacture and sale of fake goods, intellectual property piracy and the trade in African "blood diamonds" (Blanford 2011:356).

3.5 Hezbollah's Response to Neoliberal Reform

Throughout three decades of neoliberal reform, Hezbollah continued to portray itself as the party of the "oppressed", which opposes deprivation and champions the rights of farmers, the poor, workers and the homeless (Harb 2010:16). In its manifesto of

2009, Hezbollah wrote:

“Savage capitalist forces, led by the USA and Western countries and embodied mainly in international monopoly networks of companies that cross nations and continents, networks of various international establishments especially the financial ones backed by superior military force have led to more contradictions and conflicts – of which not less important-are the conflicts of identities, cultures, civilizations, in addition to the conflicts of poverty and wealth ... these savage capitalist forces have turned into mechanisms of sowing dissension and destruction of identities as well as imposing the most dangerous type of cultural, national, economic as well as social theft.” (Hezbollah Manifesto 2009, Section 1: American-Western Hegemony and the world)

Despite this militant tone, Hezbollah’s theoretical conception and policy orientation have not presented any systematic alternative to neoliberalism in Lebanon. Instead, the organisation’s overall attitude has been an attempt to balance its professed social justice goals with consistent support for neoliberal measures such as liberalisation, privatisation, and fostering the growth of the private sector. We can find this contradiction in the political thought of previous important figures of Shi’a Islamic fundamentalism such as Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr and especially Khomeini.

Al-Sadr wrote two books (among many others), “*Falsafatunâ*” (Our Philosophy) in 1959 and “*Iqtisâdunâ*” (Our Economics) in 1961, with the aim of confronting Marxism and secular thoughts. These texts were very popular among Iraqi youth during this period (Baram 1994:539). In *Falsafatunâ*, his main thesis was to show Islam as the provider of a philosophy superior to other currents of thought, particularly Marxism. He advocated that the best solution to the plight of the population is the Islamization of society and an Islamic state. A follower of Al-Sadr acknowledged that *Falsafatunâ* was written with the aim of opposing the powerful communist tide during the time of Qasim’s rule in Iraq between 1958 and 1963 (Mallat 1988:707).

The second book, *Iqtisâdunâ*, is structured along similar lines, criticizing extensively Marxism (specifically Capital volume 1) and attempting to demonstrate that Marx underplays spiritualism in favour of economic reductionism. He promoted an Islamic economic system, which consists of private and public property, while refuting both socialism and capitalism (Mervin 2007:304-305). In his opinion, socio-economic problems are the result of the misconduct of man. Two reasons are put forward by Al-Sadr regarding socio-economic problems: (1) the oppressive character of man, arising from his self-love; and (2) man's inefficiency in the utilization of economic resources (Aziz 1993). According to him, the solution is therefore religious. It is an Islamic solution and not a materialistic one. He argues that the Islamic state, which will implement an Islamic economic system, sets the direction of economic activities while giving individuals the right of private ownership to achieve a social goal. He adds that the government's role in the Islamic state is to oversee and regulate economic activities, while adding that the Islamic government is free to adopt a wide range of economic policies from full control of the economy to free-enterprise in order to achieve its social goals (Aziz 1993).

Meanwhile, Khomeini developed various economic discourses according to the particular political period, adopting its economic discourses according to the interests of its Islamic movement. In 1979-82, at the height of Iran's revolution and popular mobilisation, Khomeini had presented Islam through the lens of social justice, praising the oppressed (who were equated with the poorest sections of society) and condemning the oppressors understood as the rich, the greedy palace dwellers and their foreign patrons (Abrahamian 1993:133). This radical rhetoric was instrumental in mobilising the urban populace against the Pahlavi monarchy. But after 1982, during the consolidation of the new Islamic regime of Khomeini and associated repression of the opposition (especially the left and progressive forces) he increasingly equated Islam with respect for private property and depicted the bazaar (market place) as an essential pillar of society. He now progressively delineated three main classes: an upper class (*tabaqeh-e bala*) constituted of the remnants of the old wealthy families; a middle class (*tabaqeh-e motavasset*) formed of clerics, intellectuals, civil servants, merchants, shopkeepers and tradesmen; and a lower class (*tabaqeh-e payin*) composed of labourers, peasants and slum dwellers (Abrahamian 1993:51). The "oppressed" ceased to be an economic category

describing the deprived masses, becoming instead a political label for the new regime's supporters and including wealthy bazaar merchants (Abrahamian 1993:53). The class-struggle rhetoric was significantly diminished with Khomeini arguing that Islam sought harmonious relationships between factory owners and workers and between landlords and peasants, while warning that "if these class antagonisms are not alleviated, their inevitable explosion would destroy the whole Islamic Republic" (cited in Abrahamian 1993:51).

In much the same way as Sadr and Khomeini, Hezbollah's economic thought has consistently upheld the market and defence of private property as a key tenet, despite also professing allegiance to social justice goals.⁷⁸ Throughout the neoliberal period in Lebanon, this theoretical orientation meant that Hezbollah's support for measures such as privatisation, liberalisation and opening up to foreign capital inflows, has not been viewed by the organisation as being in contradiction to its commitment to addressing poverty and inequality. Understood within a calculus of strengthening the party's political position and clientelist networks, Hezbollah may have expressed a limited rhetorical opposition to specific policies and their outcomes, but it has not presented any consistent or principled opposition to the overall trajectory of neoliberal reform in Lebanon.

These characteristics are most clearly articulated in the work of Hezbollah's development think tank, the CCSD, which has organised several large conferences around economic and social issues, including a 1999 conference entitled "The economic and social crisis in Lebanon, and alternatives" and a 2012 meeting around the theme of "Reform of social policies in Lebanon: from selective subsidy towards welfare state". During fieldwork for this thesis, I attended the latter conference held in Beirut at the Hotel Semiramis on 15 and 16 March 2012. Although the conference's introductory document noted that "it is necessary in a country such as Lebanon to seek unifying social policies ensuring community security and guaranteeing welfare", its major emphasis echoed the neoliberal language of Lebanese policy makers, highlighting "motivating growth" and facilitating "the established monetary and financial objectives [of the state]" as the key goals (CCSD 2012). Muhammad Raad

⁷⁸ Abrahamian notes that Khomeini remained constant in his defence of private property throughout his entire political life (Abrahamian 1993:51).

(2012), head of Hezbollah's Deputy bloc in parliament, summed up this orientation in his introductory speech, declaring that "the objective of social policies are to guarantee social peace, achieve well being and stimulate development in Lebanon ... the mission of this conference is to find a formula that conciliates between achieving this objective and preserving the competitiveness of the economic sectors".

This balance between ameliorating the impact of neoliberal reform while promoting growth and private sector development is also found in the writings of two prominent Hezbollah thinkers, Ali Fayyad (a former director of CCSD and currently a MP for Hezbollah in the Lebanese parliament), and Abd Al-Halim Fadlallah (the current director of CCSD) alongside the collective works undertaken by the CCSD under their leaderships. On the one hand, both authors are critical of some aspects of globalisation and the implementation of various economic agreements, including those with the IMF and the Euro-Mediterranean partnership (Fayyad 2008:15). The CCSD, in a collective work (2009:16) and Fadlallah (2008:13), also condemned the liberalisation of trade in 2001 because it hurt small enterprises not competitive enough to compete with foreign products. It also criticised the reduction of public social spending and the increase in indirect taxes (CCSD 2008a:24). In addition, the lack of transparency and equity in development policy are recurrent criticisms of CCSD works (Fadlallah 2008:13).

Despite these criticisms, however, both authors continue to place a primacy on the support of the private sector based upon "non-ideological motivated choices that enjoy a general consensus and guarantee the interests of all the parties and sectors of the society" (Fadlallah 2008:16; Fayyad 2008:13). They argue that economic and social decisions should not be taken at the expense of the private sector (CCSD 2009). In this regard, budget rationalisation is put forward as necessary in areas such as health and basic education (CCSD 2009:42). Along similar lines, both Fayyad and Fadlallah (CCSD 2008a:62) have supported the privatisation of the state electricity company, Electricité du Liban (EdL), and praised this as a positive outcome of the Paris III agreement that could help the general finances of the state. Indeed, Hezbollah Minister Muhammad Fneich was an important actor in the on-going privatisation of EdL (Verdeil 2008) as Minister of Energy and Water between July 2005 and November 2006, arguing for the possibility of private companies to provide

their electricity to the network (Verdeil 2009). Fneich called for the full privatisation of electricity production stating that experience showed that the "state is an unsuccessful merchant" (cited in Habib 2008), while declaring in addition that the government "should not be involved in any commercial activity, adding that the private sector should be given a bigger role in some of the public departments' affairs which have commercial nature" (cited in Habib 2008). According to Fneich, the private sector should be responsible for the operation and maintenance of power plants, as well as importing fuel oil (Habib 2008).

Even Hezbollah-affiliated trade unionists have supported this privatisation, with one trade unionist interviewed for this thesis noting:

"If privatization is good for the people why not? It might open new opportunities for workers and I am ready to listen to what it can give. If the privatization can settle the problem of electricity (regarding the problems of provisions of the EdL and to secure stable jobs to its employees) I say yes." (Zeid 2012)

This attempt to balance social justice goals with neoliberal reform is further indicated in comments by Abd Al-Halim Fadlallah. He affirmed that "the economic direction of the party leans towards the social market economy, neither open liberalism nor socialism" (Fadlallah 2012a). He added that he is in favour of the free market, because there is no alternative to it in Lebanon. He nevertheless emphasized the need of a stronger state, and not an economy that impoverishes the poor for the benefit of the rich (Fadlallah 2012a). He has also said that Hezbollah does not oppose a liberalised economy or the privatisation of public enterprises if this process is transparent and respects social and economic balances (Fadlallah 2010). He declared that social justice is possible through a liberal economy if it is well regulated and the productive economy plays a role in it (Fadlallah 2010).

In reality, however, this orientation towards a "social market economy" has tended to be eclipsed by Hezbollah's consistent support for neoliberal measures. This has been the case whether the organisation has been in opposition or part of the ruling government. Following the 2003 Paris II Conference, while Hezbollah was part of the

opposition, it did not take a position or offer any assessment of the social consequences of privatising state assets including Middle East Airlines (MEA) (Abla 2003; Nsouli 2007), a company that employed several hundred Shi'a who were subsequently made redundant. The privatisation of MEA led to considerable protests against the prospect of 1,200 to 1,500 workers losing their jobs (Al-Bayyan 2001). Ali Taher Yassine, the current head of the Hezbollah-linked al-Wafa trade union (see chapter 6), was involved in the negotiations around the lay-offs as a representative of the workers. In an interview for this thesis, he claimed that the proposed privatisation was not necessarily against the interests of the workers or the wider population (Yassin 2012). Moreover, he stated that Hezbollah has no principled positions against privatisation, but that each case must be studied to determine whether it has positive or negative implications for the country's economy (Yassin 2012). He explained that:

“the company used to lose money every year, it was a burden on the Lebanese society and, the company had no stability. Privatisation became a necessity and the state was still able to keep the majority of shares of the company. This solution was the least harsh solution for the workers. We protected a number of workers and eased the pressure on them, but at the end of the day we have to make a balance between the interests of the workers and the needs of the Lebanese economy. I don't want to protect the rights of the workers and then the company dies. It does not make sense. The first right is the right to work, then other rights come.” (Yassin 2012)

Since Hezbollah's participation in successive Lebanese governments from 2005, no additional funds were allocated to sectors like education and health or the productive sectors of economy. There was no attempt to implement progressive taxation. On January 4 2007, the parliament, including Hezbollah, adopted the plan conducted by then Prime Minister Siniora, which included: austerity measures aimed at bringing the debt down from 180 percent to 144 percent of GDP in 2011, VAT increase from 10 percent to 15 percent, privatisation of the mobile telephone sector, elimination of the budget deficit in five years, initiatives to attract foreign investors, and fiscal reform of

the administration (Vivien 2007).

Even when Hezbollah and its allies of the March 8 movement controlled the government during Miqati's government between 2011 and 2013, it did not challenge Hariri's policy legacy. They continued the process of privatisation in the electricity company EdL, promoted a project to liberalize the system of house rent, which could force more than 180,000 families out of their homes (see below) and rejected a program by Charbel Nahas⁷⁹ to increase wages and social benefits including universal health coverage of workers and transport indemnities (discussed in detail in Chapter 6).

Budgets for the productive sectors have not seen any increase, except for a very small increase in the Ministry of Agriculture – and, in this case, only to expand its bureaucracy (see below). In the 2012 budget, the accounts of the CDR as well as some other accounts were kept off the budget, which meant that the supervision and governance of public spending would remain unchanged. This is in opposition to Hezbollah previous claims for more transparency (Saif 2012). The increase in the salary scale, which was accepted by the Minister of Education in 2012, was not included in the 2012 budget (Saif 2012).

In the 2013 draft budget of the Miqati government, supported by Hezbollah, a number of provisions raised taxes on many everyday items while creating loopholes and workarounds for banks, real estate developers and sectarian institutions. The draft notably included an increase in the VAT from 10 to 12 percent, which would raise the poverty rate to 32 percent (Chaaban and Salti 2009:7). Five-year tax exemptions (beginning from the date of the law's issuing) were given to hotels in areas that the state wishes to develop. Tourist establishments built in the last three years would also be exempted from taxes on profits for the next five years (Zbeeb 2012b). In 2014, with the establishment of a new national unity government led by Prime Minister Tamam Salam, Hezbollah member Hussein Hassan (the newly appointed

⁷⁹ Charbel Nahas is a political personality who was a former Minister of Telecommunication between 2009 and 2011, and then Labour Minister between 2011 and February 2012 in Najib Miqati's second government. He was representing in government the bloc Change and Reform, which is headed by General Michel Aoun. He submitted his resignation to Michel Aoun on the 21st of February 2012, and officially resigned on the 22nd of February 2012, arguing that all of his colleagues in government were preventing any effective improvement in workers' rights.

Minister of Industry) thanked the Parliament for decreasing tax on exports by 50 percent and congratulated industrialists for this long awaited accomplishment (National News Agency (NNA) 2014a). He added that this was the first step in support of exports (NNA 2014a).

In summary, while Hezbollah has periodically condemned the outcomes of capitalist development in Lebanon at a rhetorical level, it has been a willing participant in the elaboration of neoliberal policies through successive Lebanese governments. As the first section of this chapter observed, these policies have particularly concentrated on urban renewal and reform, linked to the financialisation of the economy – and have led to the on-going marginalisation of other sectors such as agriculture. For this reason, a more detailed understanding of Hezbollah's orientation to these processes is best illustrated through an examination of three key areas that lie at the juncture of these outcomes: (1) Municipal urban policy in Hezbollah-controlled areas, (2) Debates around the liberalisation of the rent market, and (3) Agricultural development. In each of these areas, we can discern Hezbollah's support for neoliberal reforms, coupled with the organisation's attempts to strengthen its clientelistic networks and influence in Shi'a dominated areas.

3.6 Municipal Policies, the Case of Ghobeyri

In Lebanon, municipal councils are accorded a great deal of influence over urban planning, zoning regulations and housing policy. In this context, the municipality of Ghobeyri, in southern Beirut, constitutes a particularly instructive example of Hezbollah policies at the local level. Ghobeyri occupies a large part of Dahyeh, and is the location of the headquarters and associations of Hezbollah.⁸⁰ Mona Harb has noted that, in Ghobeyri, "the largest municipal committees (those of work, education, health, financial and social) are in the hands of Hezbollah executives or individuals who worked with the party through its social associations" and, for this reason, it provides "a microcosm of the operation of Hezbollah on the field" (Harb 2001:7). In

⁸⁰ Ghobeyri has been controlled by Hezbollah since the end of the Civil War. Its inhabitants differentiate themselves according to various categories: national (Lebanese, Palestinians, Syrians) and regional. The region of origin sometimes shapes the organisation of a neighbourhood, for example, families from the same village in South Lebanon or the Bekaa are aggregated in a similar place. In addition, there is a differentiation between the "aslyiin" originally from the neighbourhoods and the "wafidin" newcomers or migrants, who differentiate themselves according to their date of arrival (Harb 2010:82).

Ghobeyri, and Dahyeh more widely, Hezbollah's urban restructuring policy has closely followed the main precepts of neoliberal reform – the prioritisation of private, individual ownership of real estate and the marginalisation of existing residents. It is a policy that, according to Mona Fawaz, has acted to “consolidate spatial segregation, the privatization of public spaces, the gentrification of its areas of intervention, and further delegation of communal or public services to private channels of provision” (Fawaz 2014:922-923).

One of the consequences of this policy has been the increasing polarisation of wealth in the municipality. On one hand, the area is home to a number of expensive hotels and touristic developments, including BHV-Monoprix, Mariott, Summerland and the Coral Beach (Harb 2002:133). At the same time, large numbers of poor residents live in dilapidated and informal housing arrangements. This includes the Palestinian refugee camp of Shatila, the site of an infamous massacre by Phalangist forces.

Muhammad Said Al-Khansa, who is a founding member of Hezbollah and has been active in the various party social organisations, has been the Mayor of the municipality of Ghobeyri since 1998. He comes from a large and respected clan that dominates the busy trade in automobile parts, according to Norton (2007:104). He adds that the “Al-Khansa are represented across a rich variety of business” (Norton 2007:104).

With increased powers as a result of the 1997 Law, the Mayor of Dahyeh Al-Khansa has followed a municipal development policy that is in close synergy with the urban renewal schemes launched under Hariri. Most saliently, this policy has focused on attracting private capital flows and speculative investment into real estate property, while marginalising and dispossessing poor communities who have long been resident in the area (Harb 2009).

During an interview for this thesis, Al-Khansa confirmed this orientation and his prioritisation of private real estate development in Ghobeyri. He cited numerous examples, including two large malls directly linked to the liberalisation of financial and

real estate markets through the 2000s – the Beirut Mall (2006),⁸¹ funded by Saudi investors, and BHV (1998), a large French multinational company. In addition, Al-Khansa has overseen the development of commercial tourist resorts (Summerland, funded by Saudi and Lebanese investors, and Coral Beach), luxury hotels (Monroe and Marriott) and the Cité Sportive (a sport centre) (Harb 2002:137; Al-Khansa 2012). The Mayor explains his support for these developments through the taxes they pay to the municipality, and characterises them as an example of “progress” that responds to the consumer demands of the residents of Dahyeh (Harb 2002:137; Al-Khansa 2012). They were provided with numerous incentives, including fast track permits, construction subsidies and the development of associated infrastructure (Al-Khansa 2010; Al-Khansa 2012). In an interview, Al-Khansa commented that “the region of Dahyeh has witnessed an urban renaissance over the past years, and it is not surprising that there are luxury apartments in the area of Ghobeyri ranging between 800,000 dollars to one million dollars” (Al-Khansa 2010).

While expressing pride in this on-going construction boom and real estate investments from wealthy Shi’a businessmen of the diaspora and from Arabs in the Gulf, Al-Khansa has another project planned called “New Dahyeh”. This new neighbourhood aims to attract diplomatic buildings, large malls, retailers, businessmen and investments from the Shi’a diaspora. Al-Khansa explained that this project had the intention to keep the most prosperous Shi’a classes in Dahyeh and to not see them depart for other areas of Beirut (Al-Khansa 2012).

While these developments are planned, the Shatila refugee camp and informal neighbourhoods in Ghobeyri, including Sabra, Horch Al-Qatil and Jnah, are provided with only minimal and ineffective urban services (Harb 2009). The Mayor commented in his interview that he would like to see the residents of these informal neighbourhoods sell their lands and leave the area in order to build new buildings for middle class families – a goal first suggested by Rafiq Hariri in his incomplete 1996 Elissar Project that aimed at restructuring the residential profile of Beirut through an expansion of highways and the removal of poorer residents (Al-Khansa 2010; Al-Khansa 2012). More precisely, the project cited the western coastal sections of

⁸¹ In the case of the Beirut Mall, Al-Khansa was able to choose a percentage of the employees to recruit in order to favour people from Dahyeh, and most probably with links to himself (Deeb and Harb 2013:71).

Dahyeh that are an area of informal settlements with myriad unsettled property rights issues (Deeb and Harb 2013:233). Indeed, Al-Khansa has expressed his support for the Elissar Project, claiming that it was a strategic choice that would enable increased tax collection from residents in the area. In 1996, at the beginning of the Elissar project, Hezbollah actually “convinced”, as explained by Lara Deeb and Mona Harb (2013:233), residents to accept Elissar’s financial compensation and leave their homes in order to facilitate the highways needed to complete Hariri’s reconstruction of downtown Beirut. They add that this clearly showed Hezbollah’s prioritization of national political manoeuvrings and alliances over its constituents’ rights (Deeb and Harb 2013:233). Mona Harb, however, has countered “that Hezbollah is interested in the Elissar model as a way to ensure that ‘the seashore is liberated’ for lucrative real estate development, which will benefit the class of bourgeois developers in its constituency” (Harb cited in Ohrstrom and Quilty 2007).

Al-Khansa’s goal of spatially transforming Ghobeyri through the removal of informal communities is further indicated on the municipality’s website, which records destruction of ‘illegal settlements’ and lauds the joint efforts of the municipality, the police, and the army to demolish poorer, unregistered housing in order to preserve the “interests of all” (Ghobeyri municipality 2013). The Union of Municipalities of the Suburbs (Dahyeh), has echoed this orientation in declarations against informal dwellings – condemning them as violations of private property rights – and calling on the municipality and security agencies to remove all such housing from the area (Slab News 2013). In implementing these policies, Hezbollah has adopted a discourse that sees public space as a potential site of disorder (*fawda*). In addition to the privatisation of these areas, they have been earmarked for trash disposal sites (Fawaz 2007:22-23). These kinds of representations echo contemporary neoliberal language that justifies intensified securitisation and control over public access and use of municipal space (Fawaz 2007:22-23).

3.7 Lebanon’s House Rent Policy

The municipal development model embraced by Hezbollah in Ghobeyri confirms the organisation’s embrace of policies aimed at restructuring the urban space in line with the interests of capital accumulation. This same orientation can be seen in

Hezbollah's attitude towards a new liberalisation law for house rents that was eventually passed by the Lebanese Parliament in May 2014.

In 1992, following the end of the Civil War, two laws were passed in Lebanon (Rent Acts no.159 and 160) which froze all housing rental agreements signed before this date and thus helped to protect poorer communities from rent inflation and the possibility of eviction (Martot 2012). In 2012, however, a new law was proposed by the Administration and Justice Parliamentary Committee – a committee that included Hezbollah – to liberalise these pre-1992 house rents so that they would rise over a period of six years to current market levels. The projected rise in house rents is very high, and most tenants would not have been able to cope with it (Andraos 2012).⁸² The new law also gave owners the right to evict tenants in the case where they could not afford to pay at the new level (Abou Zaki 2012b).

These proposals raised considerable fears that the 180,000 families currently renting at pre-1992 levels would face the loss of their accommodation. A large proportion of this number is made up of elderly people, and it is estimated that 65 percent of those affected live in poverty.⁸³ As Rana Andraos has noted, the significant gaps between income and rents means that people on “a minimum wage of around \$500” would find it difficult to obtain housing in a situation where the “average annual rent is between \$7-10,000 in the capital and suburbs” (Andraos 2012). Bruno Marot predicted:

“the rapid deletion of House Rent Acts n°159 and 160 — meaning the liberalization of the whole housing stock — will confront many households with a housing market they cannot afford. Massive evictions towards the periphery should be feared and could result in the rise of social and territorial inequality between gentrified central urban areas and peripheries coping with a substantial influx of pauperised

⁸² The bill envisages an increase of about 20 percent of the difference between the old and the current rent during the first year following the implementation of the law. At the end of the initial six years period, the tenant must sign a lease contracts with duration of three years minimum.

⁸³ Three-quarters of the apartments affected by the new law are in Beirut and Mount Lebanon (Abu Zaki 2012; Abdallah 2012).

families. This process would be far from being harmless in a society where the socio-sectarian fabric is still largely contentious.” (Marot 2012)

Despite these fears, the proposed law was met with acclaim by banks and real estate developers who predicted a large increase in land prices following the removal of rent caps (Abou Zaki 2012b). One business magazine noted:

“With buildings being vacated and renovated, and others being torn down for new projects ... \$50 billion could be pumped into the economy in the coming years. A back of the envelope calculation of 30,000 buildings being re-developed at an average of \$500,000, would generate \$15 billion and potentially billions more in associated services.” (Cochrane 2012)

In an interview for this thesis, the head of the National Federation of Trade Union of Workers and Employees in Lebanon (known as FENASOL) and LCP member, Castro Abdallah, argued that:

“The new law regarding house rents is in the interests of the big companies, foreign investments and banks. The most important investments are made in the real estate sector. They want to liberalize the rents because the price of lands went up, this concerns 180,000 renting families that they want to take out in the next 6 years and put them in other regions. They want to create new demographics on the ground. Want to push people back in their sectarian regions. They want to achieve what they were not able to do during the Civil War. Sectarian cantons.” (Abdallah 2012)

On the main beneficiaries of this law, Hisham Ashkar has argued:

“In sum, property owners are the main beneficiaries, since this reform allows them to have total control on their properties, and

to maximize the capitalization on them. Tenants are the real losers, since they lost all their privileges, and most of them will be forced out of their homes. As for the real-estate investors/developers, they do not really benefit from this reform, since it strengthens property owners' negotiation position, in a sector already characterized by the scarcity of its prime resource: land. A situation that will force investors/developers to compromise, to share a bigger part of the perceived profit with property owners, thus cutting down their own profit." (Ashkar 2014a)

In the context of this highly contested debate over the rental laws, Hezbollah has been a prominent supporter of the new changes. In an interview for this thesis, Abd Al-Halim Fadlallah (2012a) from the CCSD stated that he was in favour of the new law and considered the fixed low house rents a problem and unsustainable for the owner, although he added that total liberalisation of the sector may not be the best solution because of its probable negative consequences on the 180,000 families concerned. Once again, we see Hezbollah's general support for market reform coupled with an expression of social justice concerns.

At the level of practical intervention however, these concerns around the possible implications of the law have not led Hezbollah to engage in any opposition to the law. The union leader Castro Abdallah (2012) (see above) stated in an interview that Hezbollah did not participate in any demonstrations against the law and has not supported the Association of the Owners of Rental Buildings, which defended the tenants. In April 2014, the law to liberalise the pre-1992 rent contracts was voted in the Lebanese parliament, and all Hezbollah deputies voted in favour with the exception of Walid Sukkarieh, Hezbollah MP, (who criticized the law as a gross violation of the rights of the tenants) (Noujeim 2014). A proposal by the Follow-Up Committee of the National Conference of Tenants to include a new housing plan for the poor was not included in the bill.⁸⁴ In response to the passing of the bill, activists have continued to mobilise against the expected eviction of tenants and the

⁸⁴ The bill did establish a temporary fund to help the poor pay their increased rent, but sceptics fear it is not a long term solution and will eventually lead to the eviction of thousands of families (Abizeid 2014).

gentrification of Beirut and Mount Lebanon. Hezbollah, however, has not participated in these protests (NNA 2014b).⁸⁵

3.8 The Bekaa Valley

As the previous chapter detailed, the agricultural sector has been one of the most neglected economic sectors in Lebanon since the independence of the country. On many occasions, Hezbollah has organized few series of workshops on the Bekaa economy and engaged in some small investment plans in the region, particularly after the revolt led by Tufaily in 1997 in which some protestors accused Hezbollah of acquiescing to the policies of the Hariri's government and dismissing the Bekaa's grievances (Abisaab M. and Abisaab R. 2014:134). The Islamic movement has also claimed to support more investment for poorer and marginalised farmers, but its presence in government since 2005 has not seen this take place despite the fact that the party was in charge of the Ministry of Agriculture between 2009 and 2014. Instead, Hezbollah has continued to advance the interests of large landowners from which it draws political and clientelistic support.

These features of Hezbollah's agricultural policy are clearly evident in the case of the Bekaa Valley. As noted earlier, the Bekaa Valley was the region in which Hezbollah was established in 1982 with the help of the IRGC. Following the Civil War, the region remained a political base for the organisation, which it has administered since that time (Harb 2010:79).

With a population of 540,000, the Bekaa represents around 13 percent of the population of Lebanon (Republic of Lebanon, Ministry of Finance 2013:4; OCHA 2014), in addition to nearly 400,000 Syrian refugees registered in the area (UNHCR 2014). The Bekaa is populated by a large number of clans and the population is in its majority Shi'a, although it is also home to some Sunni and Christian. It is divided into three provinces: Baalbek/Hermel (composed of more than 72 percent of Shi'a, and around 14 percent of Sunni and 14 percent of Christian), Zahle (composed of around

⁸⁵The new liberalisation law for house rents officially came into force on December 28 2014, but two articles of the new law were invalidated by the Constitutional Council. The law and its implementation are still being discussed in the Administration and Justice Parliamentary Committee.

58 percent of Christian, 27 percent of Sunni, and 15 percent Shi'a), and West Bekaa Rashaya (composed of around 47 percent of Sunni, 28 percent of Christian and 15 percent of Shi'a) (Lebanese Election Data (LED) 2014). In addition, the Bekaa is an important farming area, with over 1/5 of the population engaged in agriculture. The central area of the Bekaa produces mainly potatoes, sugar beets, vegetables and grains, while on the slopes surrounding the western side of the Valley grapes are the most important crop (Chatila and Saade 1994). In the North, cannabis is widely grown.⁸⁶

It is estimated that 40 percent of people, around 150,000 people, in the Bekaa Valley lived on less than \$4 a day (OCHA 2014), but this figure is widely accepted to have become worse over the last few years due to the influx of Syrian refugees.⁸⁷ The region is also characterised by its poorly developed infrastructure, remote areas and a relatively weak local civil society structure, compared to South Lebanon or the urban coast areas of Mount Lebanon.

Since the early 1980s, the Bekaa has been dominated politically by Hezbollah (Deeb M. 1988:693-694). In the local elections of 2000, Hezbollah won 36 municipalities out of 38 in the area (Hamzeh 2004:132-133). This domination has continued since that time, with the organisation (in partnership with Amal) winning the vast majority of the municipalities in the Bekaa in the 2010 elections.

Hezbollah's governance in the area has come under attack by farmers for its reliance on large landowners and powerful clans (Daher 2012:421). Indeed, cannabis farmers have criticised Hezbollah for "conspiring to keep people dependent on them" by refusing to support low-cost irrigation or the building of dams and instead supporting the interests of large landowners (Hodeib 2013a).⁸⁸ In an interview conducted for this

⁸⁶ In 2012, the areas planted with cannabis in Baalbek-Hermel covered more than 150,000 acres, despite annual attempts by the government to destroy the crops, according to unofficial numbers collected by the Lebanese security forces (Hamieh 2012).

⁸⁷ As Hourani and Van Vliet have noted: "a 60 percent wage reduction has been reported in the Bekaa as a result of competition from Syrian labour and reduced border trade activities. In Baalbek for instance, daily wages for unskilled labour dropped from LP 20,000 to LP 15,000 or LP 10,000. It should be noted, however, that wage reduction is not implemented by Syrian nor Lebanese workers, but by Lebanese employers. But for the Lebanese workers affected by this wage reduction, it is Syrian refugees rather than Lebanese employers who are to blame for this" (Hourani and Van Vliet 2014).

⁸⁸ An agreement was reached in the summer 2013 to postpone cannabis field destruction for the time being, because of the clashes between farmers and the security forces (Nazzal 2013).

thesis, Jihad Al-Mualim, President of the Federation of Workers and Employees in the Bekaa, noted that large landowners are the ones benefiting from Hezbollah's agricultural policies in the Bekaa. He argued that these landowners are being assisted financially by the Ministry and being granted the vast majority of loans from private banks (Al-Mualim 2012). As a result, inequalities among farmers are very large, with 5 percent of farmers' controlling 47 percent of total cultivated lands, while half of the farmers own only 8 percent of the total cultivated lands (Nasnas 2007:178).

For this reason, Al-Mualim's federation has reiterated its demands for the establishment of a Bank of Development for Agriculture, in an attempt to redress the inequality in funding for smaller farmers. Despite an agreement between the Ministry and private banks to facilitate loans to small and middle farmers, this has not translated into reality because high risks and low benefits do not encourage banks to lend (Al-Mualim 2012; Nassif 2012, Mohieddine 2012). The need for a bank of development for agriculture has been a constant demand of the Federation of Agriculture since the end of the Civil War alongside the provision of social insurance in the agricultural sector and the establishment of a High Council of Agriculture including federations, unions, professionals and the Ministry, to discuss development policies in the sector (Nassif 2012, Mohieddine 2012).

Al-Mualim further notes that no consistent or sustainable projects to improve the irrigation of lands – especially in the Bekaa and the South – have been undertaken. Lebanon still relies upon foreign agricultural imports while national products are not protected (Al-Mualim 2012). At the same time, despite rhetorical support of Hezbollah's Minister of Agriculture to tackle the problem of cartels and monopolies in the sector, no measures limiting their influence have been implemented. The large landowners and retailers still dominate the market (Al-Mualim 2012; Mohieddine 2012).

The budget of the agriculture Ministry has been slightly increased under Hezbollah's administration, but most of this rise has been used to recruit new employees and not to promote development projects. According to Youssef Mohieddine, President of the Federation of Agriculture, the new development projects are mostly linked to

international financial assistance and projects, and not from the government. Funding is distributed to further reinforce clientelist and sectarian interests of Hezbollah (Mohieddine 2012).⁸⁹ Mohieddine claimed that:

“Until today, May 2012, no development project has been suggested by the Ministry despite the fact that we had a conference at the Ministry of Agriculture where we agreed on a common strategy for the agricultural sector and we agreed on a structure of a committee, which would gather all the unions and federations and Ministry to discuss and work projects of development. All these decisions taken by this conference were not taking into account and not implemented, and the Ministry continued to work on partisan base and work with Jihad al-Bina [Hezbollah’s construction wing]... the Minister favours its own people and institutions, by providing them first and with the largest international funding development projects. The Minister Hussein Hassan is the one who controls the distribution of aid as minister. He favours the people in his party or close to it.” (Mohieddine 2012)

In the same vein, Alfred Nassif, President of Federation of Proprietors of Kermel in the Bekaa, and Secretary President of the Federation of Agriculture in Lebanon, stated that “Yes the budget of agriculture was raised, but we have not seen anything change, and when they distribute financial assistance, it’s first to [Hezbollah’s] public and people” (Nassif 2012). This clientelism further extends to claims that Hezbollah has attempted to marginalise and divide the main agriculture unions, by establishing new structures in the Bekaa:

“[Hezbollah’s Minister of Agriculture] gave licences to numerous new associations and cooperatives in the country, and especially in the region of the Bekaa, in which they had only a poor presence. They were also provided with financial

⁸⁹ The Federation of Agriculture includes farmers from all regions of the country (the Bekaa, the South, the North and Mount Lebanon) and from all sects. It includes 14 trade unions, two federations and 58 cooperatives.

assistance. He gave a lot of assistance to others but not our unions, maybe because of our politics... He did not give to the general Federation as well, because we disagree maybe... He gives assistance to his specific groups, unions and federations such the Federation of farmers in Lebanon (known as INMA), a federation linked to Hezbollah. There is a clear discrimination in the way of dealing with people and associations according to their political colour... the Ministry provides more services and assistance to [Hezbollah-affiliated] federations and unions, such as INMA, while filling its administration with Hezbollah members and making Jihad al-Bina [Hezbollah's construction firm] an auxiliary institution of the Ministry." (Nassif 2012)

Antoine Hayek, the President of the Lebanese Association of Agriculture, has echoed these criticisms, declaring that a series of recommendations, endorsed by all political parties, were suggested in February 2009 at the socio-economic forum organized by the Commission of the European Union. The propositions were part of a comprehensive strategy to support the agricultural sector, which notably included a project of loans to the sector, the development of appropriate national banking laws and the modernisation of insurance policies related to hazards and natural disasters. All these propositions were then submitted to the Council of Ministers in 2009, but were not taken into consideration (cited in Orient Le Jour 2014a). Hayek (Orient Le Jour 2014a) also accused Hezbollah of not seeking stricter controls on imports in order to better protect national production. The former Minister of Agriculture Hassan, he said, has "failed to alleviate the problems of the sector. Agriculture has remained vulnerable to natural disasters, to all kinds of obstacles and corrupt practices, all generating high risk" (Orient Le Jour 2014a).

In addition to all this, the Islamic movement has also adopted a laissez-faire attitude regarding the lawless northern Bekaa, where drug barons have small private militias to protect their hashish fields and where stolen cars are traded and counterfeit money is printed (Blanford 2011:476-477). Hezbollah especially turns a blind eye to the cultivation of hashish because it is unwilling to antagonize the powerful clans and tribes from their illicit business (Blanford 2011:477) and to maintain their influence in

the region.

In general, the consensus among all the farmers and agriculture representatives and trade unionists interviewed for this thesis indicated that they felt sidelined from any real control or influence over agricultural policy, while Hezbollah has continued to prioritise its relationship with large landowners and its goal of strengthening its clientelist networks.

3.9 Conclusion

Lebanon's neoliberal reform process began in the early 1990s following the end of the Civil War, was accelerated under Rafiq Hariri, and has been consistently followed by all subsequent Lebanese governments. These policies have particularly aimed at attracting financial flows from outside – enabled by investment incentives, privatisation and liberalisation of ownership laws – with a focus on urban reconstruction as a main sectoral pivot of economic growth. This orientation confirms the way in which the outcomes of war and conflict have been used to deepen the trajectory of neoliberal reform. It is a trajectory supported by all main political actors in Lebanon, international institutions such as the WB and IMF (coordinated through the successive Paris aid conferences) and regional investors (particularly from the Gulf states). These policies have accentuated spatial and social inequalities in Lebanon and are closely linked to the heavily financialised nature of the country's political economy and the marginalisation of important sectors such as agriculture and industry.

In this context, Hezbollah has not distanced itself from the process of neoliberal reform. Whether in opposition or participating in government, Hezbollah has continually supported these policies including on issues such as: privatisation, tax reform and urban development. In the management of the municipalities that it governs, as well as in the urban sphere more generally, Hezbollah has promoted policies that encourage capital accumulation at the expense of poorer and marginalised residents. In agriculture, the Hezbollah Minister has not made any significant changes to previous policies and, moreover, has sought to strengthen its clientelist ties in areas such as the Bekaa Valley. We can see in Hezbollah's Minister,

and more generally in the party's policies regarding economic and social issues, no willingness of the party to challenge existent power structures and their entrenched institutional manifestations.

Hezbollah's sources of funding also explain the lack of opposition to the capitalist system and rather conservative economic program. The Islamic movement is founded on financial support from the Lebanese Shi'a middle class and bourgeoisie, the IRI, and the alms (zakât) collected by Hezbollah on behalf of Khomeini. According to Hamzeh, the party in addition to the massive funding of the IRI relies on "donations from individuals, groups, shops, companies, and banks as well as their counterparts in countries such as the United States, Canada, Latin America, Europe and Australia," and on Hezbollah's own business interests, which take "advantage of Lebanon's free market economy" with "dozens of supermarkets, gas stations, department stores, restaurants, construction companies and travel agencies" (Hamzeh 2004:64). The Hezbollah's Foreign Relations Unit, which was established in 1985 and is currently led by cleric Ali Daamoush, is actually responsible for maintaining and developing relations with the Lebanese-Shi'a communities around the world. Its main objective is fundraising for the Islamic movement, and managing religious and political propaganda on behalf of Hezbollah. The Unit is mostly composed of clerics and businessmen who are known in the Shi'a communities and are publicly associated with Hezbollah. The Unit is active in Europe, Africa, the U.S., and Asia. (Terror Control 2014).

Hezbollah's role in these processes confirm that it does not present a fundamental challenge to the current political economy framework of Lebanon but, on the contrary, has been integrated into this system as a political fraction tied to the sectarian bourgeoisie. In this sense, the early assessment made by Mehdi Amel on the behaviour of the Islamic bourgeoisie in the 1980s can be in many ways observed in Hezbollah's evolution regarding the Lebanese political system:

"the aspiration of fractions of the Islamic bourgeoisie to strengthen their positions in the power structure, or rather to modify the place they occupy within the confessional political system, in order to better share the hegemony and not to

change the system... through its participation it will lead to a strengthening and an anchoring of the confessional political system and not to its change or its suppression. This solution is not actually a solution, it will lead only to a worsening of the crisis of the system.” (Amel 1986:337-338)

The following chapter will further extend this analysis through a mapping of the evolving position of the Shi’a fraction of the bourgeoisie in Lebanon. It will show that Hezbollah’s links to this class fraction – particularly in the key sectors of urban renewal, construction and real estate – have been strengthened through the neoliberal period. The remaining chapters of the thesis will complement this analysis through an examination of how Hezbollah has nonetheless managed to deal with the contradictions arising from these policies: building a hegemonic position within the wider Shi’a population (Chapter 5) and acting to demobilise labour movements in the country (Chapter 6).

Chapter 4: Lebanese Class Structure under Neoliberalism

4.1 Introduction

This chapter traces the class structure of Lebanese society through the neoliberal period, with a particular focus on the hierarchies within the Shi'a population itself. It demonstrates that one of the features of the changes noted in the previous chapter has been the growth of an emerging Shi'a fraction of the bourgeoisie – particularly linked to the urban renewal projects discussed previously, as well as trade and diaspora connections. This class fraction is tightly connected to Hezbollah, and carries important implications for understanding the nature of the party.

The previous chapter described the initial phase of neoliberalism in Lebanon under the leadership of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri until his assassination in 2005. This chapter begins by analysing the impact of this period on the Sunni and Christian bourgeoisie – the traditional elite of Lebanon. Hariri's policy goals centred upon attracting foreign capital inflows and the prioritisation of privatisation and neoliberal urban reconstruction. These policies acted to strengthen the core of the capitalist classes in both the Sunni and Christian fractions of the bourgeoisie, which are structured around a handful of large conglomerates whose activities are spread over a range of financial, commercial and real estate interests.

At the same time as the strengthening of the Sunni/Maronite elites, however, the neoliberal period has also seen significant changes in the distribution of wealth within the Shi'a population. By the end of the first decade of the 2000s, Shi'a dominated areas had seen a marked growth in business and economic activities. Relatively speaking, the most impoverished regions had shifted to Sunni majority areas in the North of the country. Although these trends were not equally felt throughout all parts of the Shi'a population, they signified the emergence of large Shi'a-owned businesses that were particularly concentrated in the real estate, construction and trading sectors. The second part of the chapter maps concretely some of the ownership structures of these businesses and their close linkages to Hezbollah's political institutions. Hezbollah has facilitated the emergence of this class fraction while developing its own significant business activities.

The final part of the chapter outlines further evidence of the changing social base of Hezbollah through an examination of the social background of its membership cadre and the organisation's close linkages with important families in the Hezbollah stronghold of Dahyeh. It shows that Hezbollah is increasingly tied to these more prosperous layers of the Shi'a population, providing further confirmation of how Hezbollah's political orientation – notably its support of policies outlined in the previous chapter – is connected to the expanding social base of the party itself.

4.2 Sunni/Christian Business Elites in the Neoliberal Period

As noted in the previous chapter, the post Civil War era saw an increasing influence of the Sunni business community over various sectors of the Lebanese economy. The Christian fraction of the bourgeoisie lost much of its power to a Muslim-Sunni capitalist section, which benefited from foreign ties and lucrative connections to diaspora communities, particularly in the Gulf (Pearlman 2013:120-121). Today, the two richest families in Lebanon are from the Sunni community: the Hariri (three brothers and one sister) and the Miqati (two brothers) families.⁹⁰ Together their estimated wealth is \$14 billion — some 15 percent of all private wealth in the country (Executive Magazine 2013).

An analysis of key economic sectors in Lebanon illustrates the rising weight of the Sunni fraction of the bourgeoisie, alongside the enduring influence of wealthy Christian families. The banking sector, for example, is made up of more than 70 banks (Association of Banks in Lebanon 2014a), predominantly managed by founding families (although they are not always the major shareholders). The sector is largely dominated by the country's 12 'Alpha' banks,⁹¹ banks with deposits over \$2

⁹⁰ Najib Miqati is the co-founder of the M1 Group, a family-owned holding company registered on the London and Dubai stock exchanges. M1 has interests in various sectors such as telecom, real estate, aircraft financing, fashion and energy. It also operates the British Bank of Lebanon through a license it purchased from the British Bank of the Middle East (Najib Miqati Official Website 2014). The Hariri family is the owner of the Saudi Oger group, one of the largest construction companies in Saudi Arabia, which has financial interests in areas such as banking, telecommunication, real estate. The Hariri family is also a primary shareholder in the company Solidere, awarded control over the reconstruction of downtown Beirut as a centre of high-end shopping and leisure activities (Saudi Oger Website 2014).

⁹¹ The 12 Alpha Banks are Audi, BLOM, Byblos, Fransabank, Societe Generale, Credit Libanaise, BankMed, Beirut, BBAC, Libano-Francaise, First National and Intercontinental. 50 percent of the Lebanese banking sector's assets is owned by just three of these twelve: Audi, BLOM and Byblos (Traboulsi 2014:30).

billion (Cochrane 2010). At the end of 2008, Alpha banks held \$95 billion in consolidated assets, or 88.3 percent of all banks' consolidated assets, and \$77.3 billion in customer deposits (83.7 percent of total deposits) according to Bilanbanque, the annual report issued by the financial services firm BankData in collaboration with the Association of Banks in Lebanon (Cochrane 2010).

The Christian fraction of the bourgeoisie dominates the leadership of many of these Alpha banks, without necessarily holding the majority of shares. These are often in the hands of foreign actors. This includes the largest bank in Lebanon, the Audi-Saradar Bank, which is chaired by Raymond Audi,⁹² and the third largest bank, Byblos Bank, established by the Bassil Family.⁹³ In addition to these two banks, other banks controlled by the Christian fraction of the bourgeoisie in the Alpha group are the Société Générale de Banque au Liban (SGBL) headed by Antun Sehnaoui, who is also the Chair of Sehnaoui Group, which owns 81 percent of SGBL shares (SGBL 2014); Banque Libano-Française, established and chaired by Farid Raphaël⁹⁴ who owns the majority of the shares through various financial entities;⁹⁵ and Crédit Libanais, chaired by Dr. Joseph Torbey.⁹⁶

Despite these banking structures controlled by the Christian fraction of the

⁹² According to the website of the bank, “the Bank ranked first among Lebanese banks in terms of total assets (US\$ 37.8 billion), shareholders' equity (US\$ 2.8billion), customers' deposits (US\$ 32.3 billion), loans and advances (US\$ 15.3 billion)” (Bank Audi 2014a). Ownership of the bank is divided between the Audi Family 7 percent, Saradar Family 5.4 percent, Al-Homaizi Family (Kuwait) 6.1 percent, *Sheikh* Dhiab Bin Zayed Al-Nehayan (UAE) 5.10 percent, Investment Finance Opportunities Ltd (Lebanon) 4.9 percent, Middle East Opportunities For Structured Finance Ltd (Lebanon) 4.2 percent, Al-Sabbah Family (Kuwait) 4.8 percent, Investment and Business Holding sal (Lebanon) 3.9 percent, Abdullah Ibrahim Al-Hobayb (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) 2.6 percent, El-Khoury Family (Lebanon) 2.4 percent Executive and Employees (Lebanon) 4.7 percent, Others 15.3 percent, Deutsche Bank Trust Company Americas 29.3 percent (Bank Audi 2014b).

⁹³ Byblos Bank is chaired by François S. Bassil, who served three terms as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Association of Banks in Lebanon and remains a Member of the Board. He was elected as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Association of Banks in Lebanon again on July 5 2013. The Bassil family holds around 7.94 percent of the bank directly (Byblos Bank 2014).

⁹⁴ Mr. Raphaël founded Banque Libano-Française (France) in 1976 and was its Chairman and General Manager from 1985 to 1989. He was Minister of Finance, Justice and Telecommunications of the Lebanese Republic from 1976 to 1979, and President of the Lebanese Bankers' Association between 1997 and 2011 (Banque Libano-Française 2013:20-21).

⁹⁵ Libano Holding SAL 35 percent; S.E.M. Farid Raphaël 13.57 percent; Famille Khoury 7.9 percent; Financière Raphaël Holding S.A.L. 9 percent; Groupe Chaoui 8.15 percent; Al-Shams Holdings Ltd 8 percent ; Gil Holding SAL 8 percent; Others (each holding less than 8 percent of the Bank) 10.35 percent (Banque Libano-Française 2013:5).

⁹⁶ Credit Libanais was established on July 12 1961, as a Lebanese joint stock company. The Bank's ownership is split between EFG Hermes CL Holding SAL controlling 63.74 percent of the share capital and CIH Bahrain International Holding SAL with a 23.52 percent stake. The remaining 12.74 percent is owned by over 1,000 individual shareholders, including mainly executives and employees of the Bank, each with less than 5 percent (Credit Libanais 2014).

bourgeoisie, the Sunni bourgeoisie has made important inroads into the sector. The Hariri family owns the fifth largest bank in Lebanon, BankMed, through its GroupMed Holding (BankMed 2014a; BankMed 2014b:9). BankMed also owns other banking and financial companies including: Saudi Lebanese Bank, Med Investment Bank, BankMed Suisse, Saudi Med Investment Company, Med Securities Investment Company and Emkan Finance (BankMed 2014b:14). All of these institutions are 100 percent owned by the Hariri family, with Rafiq Hariri's son, Muhammad Hariri, chair of the board of many of them.⁹⁷ Aside from the Hariri family, Sunni Muslims hold majority shares in several of the country's other large banks, including the important Fransabank⁹⁸ and Blom Bank⁹⁹.

These banking networks, both in the hands of the Christian and Sunni Muslim fraction of the bourgeoisie, form the financial core of large family-owned conglomerates that operate across other economic sectors. The Hariri Group, in addition to its control of BankMed, is involved in construction (through Saudi Oger and Solidere) as well as telecommunications (through Oger Telecom) (BankMed 2014a). Other similar cases include: Pharaon Holding,¹⁰⁰ which owns the Pharaon and Chiha Banks, and is also engaged in insurance, Household Appliances, Consumer Electronics, Agrochemicals, Industrial and Domestic Gases, Flavours and Fragrances, Pharmaceuticals and Medical equipment (Pharaon Holding Companies S.A.L, Group of Companies 2014); the Obegi Group, involved in Agri-business (Unifert company),¹⁰¹ chemicals (Obegi Chemicals),¹⁰² consumer goods (Obegi

⁹⁷ BankMed Investment, Saudi Lebanese Bank, Med Investment Bank, Saudi Med Investment Company, BankMed Suisse.

⁹⁸ Fransabank is the fourth largest bank in Lebanon and is controlled by the Kassar Family. Adnan Kassar has been President of the Beirut Chamber of Commerce and Industry for the past forty years and served as Minister of Economy and Trade (2003 to 2004) and Minister of State (2009 to 2011) (Traboulsi 2014). The bank has developed the largest networks of local branches in Lebanon with a total of 116 branches, and operates in 10 countries: Lebanon, France, Algeria, Syria, Sudan, Belarus, Cyprus, Iraq, Libya, UAE (Abu Dhabi and soon in Africa) (Fransabank 2014).

⁹⁹ The Azhari family established the BLOM Bank in 1951, which is today the second largest bank in Lebanon. The Azhari family has a 2.86 percent direct stake, plus an 11.87 percent stake through the Azhari's Banorabe Holding in Luxembourg, while AZA Holding – of which the family controls 50 percent – has a 9.33 percent stake in BLOM. The rest of the shareholders are Bank of New York 34.37 percent, Actionnaires Unis 1.83 percent, Shaker Holdings S.A.L. 5.39 percent, Mrs. Nada Aoueini 5 percent, Jaroudy Family 3.52 percent, Saade Family 2.53 percent, Khoury Family 1.97 percent, others 19.51 percent (Blom Bank 2014).

¹⁰⁰ Forbes ranked it 56th in the list of the top 100 most influential companies in the Middle East (Forbes Middle East 2013).

¹⁰¹ They trade and distribute fertilizers, seeds, agricultural chemicals and irrigation equipment (Obegi Group 2014).

¹⁰² The largest independent network for distribution of chemical raw materials in the MENA region (Obegi Group 2014).

Consumer Products);¹⁰³ and the Sehnaoui group,¹⁰⁴ which, in addition to its control of SGBC, is a shareholder in fifteen companies including tourism, real estate, the media and hotels.¹⁰⁵

Through conglomerates such as these, the Christian and Sunni fractions of the bourgeoisie are involved in other sectors such as trade (both imports and exports)¹⁰⁶ and real estate development/construction. This sectoral distribution of economic interests is linked to the form of neoliberalism discussed in the previous chapter. It has also been marked by a strong interpenetration of both the political and economic spheres, with these large families straddling high-ranking positions in both commerce and government.¹⁰⁷ The main business associations – the Beirut Traders Association (BTA), the Association of Banks in Lebanon (ABL), the Association of Lebanese Industrialists (ALI) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Beirut (CCIB) – are also dominated by these conglomerates.¹⁰⁸

Importantly – and again linked to the particular form of neoliberalism in Lebanon – foreign capital inflows have helped to strengthen the position of both these Sunni and Christian conglomerates. Most significant in this respect has been foreign investment from the GCC countries. Further confirming the link between the Lebanese government and the Gulf region (particularly under Hariri's leadership), around 60 percent of FDI from 2002 to 2007 originated from the GCC. More than half of this

¹⁰³ Production, marketing, sales and distribution of fast moving consumer goods (Obegi Group 2014).

¹⁰⁴ Forbes ranked it 72th in the list of the top 100 most influential companies in the Middle East (Forbes Middle East 2013).

¹⁰⁵ Other notable family owned groups are the Debbane Group, Kettaneh Group, Malia Group, Baalbaki Group, Abou Adal Group, Johnny R.Saadé Holdings, Issa Holding, Sarkis group International, and the Averda Group (Traboulsi 2014:85-93).

¹⁰⁶ Imports are highly monopolised – according to one estimate, just 4 percent of active importing companies are responsible for 90 percent of all imports. The import sector is still largely dominated by Christian owned conglomerates, which explains the sectarian nature of the debate around a proposal by Rafiq Hariri in 2001 to open up the import market, including abolishing exclusive agencies. The law has still to be implemented due to resistance from Christian owned conglomerates (Traboulsi 2014:33).

¹⁰⁷ In construction, for example, H. Ashkar has pointed out “In post war Beirut, amid the reconstruction process, the presence of economic elite, emerging from the real estate development sector, in the political arena intensified. In times where reconstruction was the flagship of the revival of a country and its economy, in an economy where the construction sector is a main contributor to the country's GDP – second only to the service sector – several real estate developers and contractors held prominent governmental positions and several politicians had investments in the construction sector” (Hisham Ashkar 2011:70).

¹⁰⁸ Historically there have existed differences and disagreements between some of these groups, particularly between the BTA and the ALI. These differences largely centered around the relative weight of trade and industry, with some business actors arguing for a more open economy, while others sought better protection for Lebanese industry. Over time, however, these dividing lines have become increasingly blurred as the interpenetration of different sectors has increased. For a discussion of this issue see Gates 1989.

Gulf FDI was in real estate, and the remainder in services and the banking sector (Association of Banks in Lebanon 2012). As a consequence of these FDI flows, Gulf capital has become a major shareholder in key Lebanese banks – including Audi Bank¹⁰⁹, Blom Bank¹¹⁰ and Credit Libanais.¹¹¹ In real estate, Blom Investment Bank has documented that land held by GCC investors rose to “2 Million square meters (sqm) in 2005, up from 0.5 Million sqm in 2002 and increasing steadily since then” (Blom InvestBank report 2010:11).¹¹²

Alongside these capital flows from the Gulf, political relationships between the GCC and the Sunni bourgeoisie have also strengthened. Perhaps the clearest example of this is the Hariri family, which, as Hanieh has noted: “could be considered a subcomponent of Khaleeji (Gulf) Capital – its accumulation is centered in its ownership of the Saudi-based construction company Saudi Oger, and the family holds Saudi citizenship. In this sense, the neoliberal trajectory of the Lebanese government – and the country’s economic penetration by Khaleeji Capital – are directly linked to the GCC’s political influence” (Hanieh 2011:160).¹¹³

4.3 Poverty and Lebanon’s Sectarian Mix

The political and economic dominance of Sunni and Christian elites, however, has not been extended to all layers of both communities. Indeed, one of the striking

¹⁰⁹ Gulf investors hold 18.6 percent of Audi Bank. These investors include the Al-Homaizi family from Kuwait 6.1 percent and Al-Sabbah Family from Kuwait 4.8 percent, *Sheikh* Dhiab Bin Zayed Al-Nehayan from UAE 5.10 percent, Abdullah Ibrahim Al-Hobayb from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2.6 percent (Bank Audi 2014b).

¹¹⁰ Saudi-Lebanese Ghassan Shaker, son of one of the bank’s founders, owns 5.39 percent of BLOM’s shares through Shaker Holding and his wife. Nada Oweini (daughter of former Prime Minister and BLOM founder Hussein Oweini) owns 5 percent (Traboulsi 2014:87). Hussein Oweini was the first Saudi-Lebanese to become Prime Minister of Lebanon in 1951 and between 1964 and 1965, and was also a business agent for the Saudi royals between 1923 and 1947. Oweini continued playing this role even while he served as Prime Minister (Mehio 2002).

¹¹¹ Credit Libanais’ ownership is split between EFG Hermes Holding, an Egyptian company whose largest shareholder is from the UAE, and CIH Bahrain Holding owned by Saudi investor Khaled Ibn Mahfouz (Credit Libanais 2014).

¹¹² Much of this investment was facilitated by the Hariri Government’s “Foreign Acquisition of Property Law (Law No. 296, 2001)”, which abolished discrimination on property ownership by Arab and foreign nationals, and lowered real estate registration fees from 6 percent for Lebanese and 16 percent for foreigners to 5 percent for both categories of investors. In addition, capital gains made by individuals on real estate are exempted from any kind of taxation (IDAL Report 2013:20).

¹¹³ These ongoing connections have been shown by a surprise visit of a delegation of 13 representatives in March 2013 from Lebanon’s main business associations to the number three person in the Saudi royal family, Prince Muqrin Bin Abdul-Aziz, following a threat by Saudi Arabia to pull out billions from Lebanese banks due to statements by the Lebanese foreign minister regarding the conflict in Syria (Al-Akhbar English 2013c).

characteristics of the last two decades has been the increased prevalence of poverty in some key Sunni and Christian-dominated areas. While Beirut and Mount Lebanon continue to be the centre of most economic growth, the previously marginalised Shi'a areas of the South of Lebanon, southern Beirut and the Bekaa Valley (although this latter area still has high level of poverty) are no longer the poorest regions of the country. Poverty is today the most acute in some areas of northern Lebanon, in particular the city of Tripoli and its surrounding suburbs.

The most recent demographic study conducted by Informational International, a Beirut-based research firm, showed that the country was composed of 4.8 million Lebanese citizens in 2011 divided as follows: 29.375 percent Sunni Muslim (1.41 million), 29.375 percent Shi'a Muslim (1.41 million), 19.3 percent Maronite Christian (927,000), 6.75 percent Greek Orthodox (324,000), 4.375 percent Greek Catholic (210,000), 5.5 percent Armenian (132,000), 1.55 percent other Christian (74,180), 5.5 percent Druze (263,000), 0.9 percent Alawite (43,000), and 0.08 percent Jew (4,000) (As-Safir 2011). This makes a ratio of 34.8 percent of Christian and 65.1 percent of Muslim.

Of these religious groups, the Shi'a community is concentrated in the northern half of the Bekaa, Baalbek and Hermel, which have a population of more than 75 percent Shi'a, in southern Beirut and southern towns such as Bint Jbeil and Nabatieh (Corstange 2012). Sunni mainly live in Beirut, and northern areas such as Tripoli and the Akkar, as well as in the central Bekaa and in the southern city of Saida. Various Christian communities are located in Beirut, Mount Lebanon, Zahle, Jezzine, with smaller numbers living in the Bekaa, the South and the North (Lebanese Election Data 2014).

Regarding the socio-economic situation of each region, from 1997 to 2005, the two governorates of Mount Lebanon and the North saw a relative decline in their mean per capita expenditure. The decline was nevertheless far more significant for the mostly Sunni-populated North, which witnessed a major deterioration in its mean per capita ranking – from the third highest in the country to the lowest in 2004-2005 (UNDP 2008b:16-17). In this same period, Beirut saw the highest growth rate in per capita consumption, 5 percent annually, as a result of investments and widespread

job creation witnessed in the city after 1997. Growth rates in consumption expenditures were around 4 percent higher than the national average in Shi'a populated areas such as Nabatieh, the Bekaa and the South (UNDP 2008b:17). Mount Lebanon and the North had a growth below the national average, with the Northern governorate observed an insignificant annual growth of 0.14 percent (UNDP 2008b:17). The Shi'a dominated Nabatieh governorate witnessed the country's highest level of growth in per capita private consumption between 1997 and 2004 with a figure of 5.82 percent (UNDP 2008b:46). This growth was most likely the effect of worker remittances from abroad, and a strong network of non-governmental organised support around reconstruction (discussed further in the following chapter) (UNDP 2008b:46).

In 2005, the mean per capita consumption was highest in Beirut (more than 150 percent of the national average), and lowest in the Sunni-dominated North (75 percent of the national average) (UNDP 2008b:46). These figures were reflected in the North's increased poverty levels (a 52 percent poverty headcount using the upper poverty line and 17.5 percent using the lower poverty line) (UNDP 2009:151). The North makes up 20.7 percent of Lebanon's population, but 46 percent of the "extremely poor population" and 38 percent of the entire poor population, which is the aggregate of the extremely and moderately poor population (UNDP 2008b:48). At the same time, the "extremely poor population" represented in Beirut is 0.87 percent, Mount Lebanon 18.94 percent, the Bekaa 17.16 percent, the South 15.38 percent and Nabatieh 1.62 percent (UNDP 2008b:111).

Households in the North are four times more likely to be poor in comparison with those that reside in Beirut. There are, moreover, substantial differences in poverty within the North governorate: Tripoli city and the Akkar region, mostly populated by Lebanese Sunni, have the highest percentage of overall poverty rates, with extreme poverty reaching 20.61 percent in Akkar and 23.17 percent in Tripoli, and overall poverty rates of 62.98 percent and 56.72 percent respectively (UNDP 2008b:48). The economic and employment conditions of Akkar were particularly hard hit by the 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon, and later as a result of the destruction of the Palestinian

refugee camp of Nahr Al-Bared camp in the summer of 2007.¹¹⁴ In contrast, the Koura, Zgharta, Batroun and Bcharre regions, mostly populated by Lebanese Christian, have relatively low poverty levels with 24.7 percent of overall poverty and 4.5 percent extreme poverty (UNDP 2008b:48).

In terms of infrastructure and economic activities, the differences are also significant. According to the Central Administration for Statistics (CAS), there are only 17,000 [commercial] establishments in the North Lebanon governorate, compared to 73,000 in Mount Lebanon and 72,000 in Beirut (Abou Zaki 2012a). Beirut and Mount Lebanon are also the main centres of tourism and hold 75 percent of the country's hotels (Ministry of Tourism 2004 cited in UNDP 2009:129). Moreover, Beirut and its suburbs, which include nearly 38 percent of the total population of Lebanon, had at the end of 2004 nearly 70 percent of all commercial bank deposits and were receiving more than 80 percent of total bank loans (Nasnas 2007:46). In contrast, the northern city of Tripoli's share of bank loans to the private sector did not exceed 2-3 percent (Abou Zaki 2012a).

These statistics show that the most impoverished regions are now concentrated in Sunni majority areas of the North¹¹⁵ rather than the previously excluded Shi'a areas of the southern suburbs of Beirut and South Lebanon. Over the past two decades, the regions with a majority Shi'a population have actually moved from a position of marginalisation and poverty to one of increased economic and political weight, while the northern areas mostly constituted of the Sunni population, have seen their position worsen.

At the same time, inequalities, just as in the rest of the Lebanese society, are

¹¹⁴ The effects of both wars had important consequences on revenue in the region: businesses registered a 91.5 percent decrease in income due to closures or damages to shops. Akkar was also excluded from most national and international emergency funds donated to rebuild and rehabilitate war-stricken areas (Moushref 2008; Carpi 2014).

¹¹⁵ In this context, Sunni-populated regions in the North have witnessed the development of Islamic political movements and Salafi groups, which provide many health and social services, as well as a political presence. In Tripoli, Salafist factions rely on a network of mosques, NGOs and schools, and receive financing from various Gulf monarchies, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait (Alami 2008). Salafist groups developed considerably in Tripoli in the aftermath of the withdrawal of the Syrian army in 2005. Many salafists schools and organisations who were closed or had to stop their activities reopened in this period, including the Institute of Guidance and Charity of the Salafist *Sheikh* Shahal, the son of the founder of the Salafist movement in Lebanon (Nadine Elali 2012).

important in Shi'a populated areas. This can be seen in the very high within-region poverty rates for those areas where Shi'a form a high majority: in the Baalbek Hermel region, comprised of more than 70 percent Shi'a, the percentages of lower and upper poverty lines represented respectively 13.4 percent and 32.54 percent in 2005; in Tyr (around 84 percent Shi'a), they were 8.96 percent and 36.41 percent respectively (UNDP 2009:147); in Nabatieh (more than 95 percent Shi'a), they were 1.05 percent and 11.37 percent respectively; in Bint Jbeil (more than 87 percent Shi'a), they were 3.09 percent and 25.51 percent respectively (UNDP 2008b:110; Lebanese Election Data 2014). These figures indicate that poverty remains very high within Shi'a areas, despite the fact that the position of the community relative to other sects has improved. There has been, in other words, a widening gap and differentiation of the Shi'a population itself.

The polarisation of wealth inside the Shi'a population is perhaps best observed in Dahyeh, a stronghold of Hezbollah and composed in its far majority by Shi'a (around 80 percent of its 750,000 inhabitants) (Wehbe M. 2013b). The journalist Muhammad Wehbe has described the increasing social inequalities of Dahyeh as follows:

“Overpopulation put pressure on public services and infrastructures, resulting in the strengthening of illegal individual initiatives, such as electricity generators and water tanks. The poor live side by side with the middle and high class in the same geographic location populated by one same sect. There is little development taking place in the suburb, and the crime rate is increasing. The children of parents, whom had come to Dahyeh in search of security and an income, are now leaving Lebanon in search of a decent job. The scene shows the numerous class contradictions within the walls of each religious sect. In the Hay Al-Sellom neighbourhood of Dahyeh, expensive SUVs share the road with small cars, taxicabs, and motorbikes. In Haret Hreik and Hay Al-American (the Americans' neighbourhood) also in Dahyeh, it is not odd to find shops renting for as high as \$3,000 a month, in contrast to other places in the southern suburbs like Souk Al-Jammal in

Shiah and Souk Al-Burj, where rents do not exceed, at most, \$600 ... The difference in the price of a square meter of a built-up area between Hay Al-Sellom and Haret Hreik can reach up to 30 percent. Similarly, an apartment in Hay Al-American can cost more than \$500,000, compared to a maximum of \$170,000 for an apartment in Hay Al-Sellom.” (Wehbe M. 2013b)

The head of the CCSD, Abd Al-Halim Fadlallah, classified the residents of Dahyeh as lower middle-class or upper lower-class (Wehbe M. 2013a), while others have spoken of the rise of a “Shi’a middle class” after the Ta’if Agreement which spread over wider areas of Dahyeh (Mohsen 2012). This rising middle class has been experiencing, according to journalist Ahmad Mohsen, “an upward movement not only physically, with a construction boom, but also economically and socially. This encouraged investors to set up amenities to suit this new class, which grew on the margins of the changes taking place during the Hariri era” (Mohsen 2012). In addition to this, in the wake of the Liberation of the South in 2000 from Israeli occupation, private investments and real estate development schemes privileging middle and high-end consumers multiplied in Dahyeh (Deeb and Harb:53). The area is, in other words, not simply a zone of poor slums as it is often presented, but rather an increasingly significant indication of the class changes and differentiation within the Shi’a population itself.¹¹⁶

In summary, the last two decades have seen the emergence of a layer of the Shi’a population that has risen to an important position within Lebanon’s class structure. Taken as a whole, the Shi’a are marked by an increased polarisation of wealth between this layer – which profited from neoliberal reform and the recalibration of the sectarian system following the Ta’if Agreement – and poorer layers of the population which populate Shi’a suburbs in Beirut, the Bekaa and the South. The following section explores in greater detail the composition of this emerging Shi’a fraction of

¹¹⁶ According to one estimate, Dahyeh holds more than 30 percent of Lebanon’s total domestic purchasing power (Wehbe M. 2013a).

The area’s business activities have increased following the 2006 war, a study carried out by Lara Deeb and Mona Harb published in volume 14 of *Bâhithât* [women researchers], 2009-2010, under the title “Cultural Activities of Arab Youth,” showed that 64 percent of Dahiyeh’s cafes and restaurants appeared between 2006-2008, and the number of bank branches in the area increased from 64 in 2009 to more than a hundred in 2013, according to some bankers (cited in Mohsen 2012).

the bourgeoisie and its connection to Hezbollah.

4.4 Mapping the Shi'a Fraction of the Bourgeoisie

As the previous chapter outlined, one of the distinctive features of neoliberal reform in Lebanon has been the emphasis on the liberalisation of capital inflows, particularly aimed at the reconfiguration of urban space through new housing and tourist developments and other construction projects. Much of this has targeted Shi'a-majority areas in Greater Beirut and the South of Lebanon under Hezbollah control. These construction activities have been supported through parallel state funding, which has leveraged a growing volume of investments from the Lebanese Shi'a diaspora living in Africa and North and South America (Nasr 2003:155). The emerging Shi'a fraction of the bourgeoisie has converged around these capital flows, utilising them as a means to deepen their accumulation opportunities.

As part of the initial rise of Amal documented in the previous chapter, Nabih Berri played an instrumental role through the post Civil War period in supporting this process. Fawaz Traboulsi describes his role succinctly:

“Berri needed the post (Speaker of Parliament) to become a focus for economic interests, especially the real estate, banking, trade and other concerns of Shi'a diaspora in Africa and the Gulf. During the Civil War, Berri had formed what was termed “the Shi'a Holding Company”, and when fighting forced the closure of Beirut's commercial center and economic activity had become divided between Jounieh and Kaslik in East Beirut and Hamra and Verdun streets in the West, Berri came to oversee a new real estate zone in Ain El-Tineh and Verdun that constituted the second biggest arena for African investment after that of Mazraa. Following the 1975-89 Civil War he oversaw Intra Invest Company (IIC) and the Finance Bank through its chairman Hassan Farran, as well as infrastructure developments projects in the South.” (Traboulsi 2014:71)

One indication of the presence of this growing Shi'a fraction of the bourgeoisie is its increased representation in the main business associations. As Baroudi (2000:92) has noted, the number of members representing the Shi'a fraction of the bourgeoisie never held more than 2 out of 24 seats in the *Jam'iyyat Tujar Beirut* (Beirut Traders Association (BTA)) board prior to the Civil War. This number was to double to four in 1998, following negotiations between Rafiq Hariri and Nabih Berri (the head of Amal) with the Shi'a members nominated by Shi'a merchants in consultation with the Shi'a dominated *Tajamu' al-Iqtisâdiyyin al-Lubnâniyyin* (the Association of Lebanese economists) (Baroudi 2000:92). The number of members of the Shi'a fraction of the bourgeoisie on the BTA has remained at this level until today (Beirut Traders Association 2014).

In the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Beirut and Mount Lebanon, the representation of the Shi'a fraction of the bourgeoisie on the Board of Directors increased from 11 percent before the Civil War, to 21 percent after the Civil War (Baroudi 2000:96). Muslim members of the Board were now equally divided between Sunni and Shi'a. In the Association of Lebanese Industrialists, there is now parity on the board between Muslim and Christian, while in 1975 it was composed of two thirds Christian and one third Muslim (Baroudi 2000:96).¹¹⁷ The representation of the Shi'a fraction of the bourgeoisie has now reached five members, up from two in 1988 and none before 1975 (Association of Lebanese Industrialists 2014).

The only business association where this shift is not found is the Association of Lebanese Banks, which was formed in 1959 and held a large Christian majority on its Board of Directors until the 1990s, reflecting the domination of Christians over the banking sector in the country described above. After the Ta'if Agreement, representation on the Board was distributed equally between Christians and Muslims. Four Sunni nevertheless dominate the representatives for the Muslim community, whereas there is only one Shi'a and one Druze (Baroudi 2000:98). In 2014 the only Shi'a representative was Tanal Sabah, President of the Lebanese Swiss Bank (Association of Banks in Lebanon 2014b). The weakness of Shi'a representation indicates the particular character of class formation in the Shi'a community (see below for further detail), specifically their absence in commercial banking; only four

¹¹⁷ At the time of independence, the ratio in the Board of Directors was actually five Christians to one Muslim.

banks are controlled by Shi'a – the Lebanese Swiss Bank, owned by Tanal Sabah, Middle East and African Bank (MEAB), owned by the Hejeij family, the Fenicia Bank, owned by the Achour Group and the Jammal Trust Bank (JTB) owned by Anwar Ali Jammal.

A more micro-level analysis confirms these trends. The Annex provides an overview of some of the key Shi'a-owned companies and individuals that constitute an important segment of this bourgeoisie. The groups listed have been identified by their representation on the industry councils noted in the preceding paragraphs, as well as through discussions with business analysts and individuals in Lebanon itself. The data indicates three salient characteristics:

First, these business groups are clustered around two main economic activities – construction/real estate activities and the import/export trade. One example of this is the Shar Metal Company (SMC), which is owned by the Shahrour family. SMC is the largest ferrous and non-ferrous scrap metal exporter and processor in the Middle East, and is thus a good example of how trade liberalisation has helped to underpin the development of Shi'a trading activities. SMC's CEO, Fadi Ali Shahrour, has strongly supported neoliberal reform in Lebanon in his position as Vice President of the BTA since 1998 and is also close to Nabih Berri.¹¹⁸ The Shahrour family has important investments in multiple sectors of the Lebanese economy including trade, industry and real estate (March 14 2010; Shar Metal Company 2013; Metal Bulletin Company Database 2013). In the real estate sector, the Jaber Group provides an illustrative example of an important Shi'a controlled conglomerate. The Group has built numerous luxury apartment buildings in downtown Beirut and also operates three major hotel chains. In addition to its real estate development activities, Jaber produces and exports LPG gas cylinders (Jaber Group 2013). A member of the Jaber family, Yassin Jaber, was Minister of the Economy and Foreign Trade between May 1995 and November 1998. In this position, he supported the Hariri government's liberalisation of trade (Baroudi 2001:89).

Another important characteristic of these new Shi'a-based conglomerates is their

¹¹⁸ He also was elected to the municipality of Beirut in 2010 on the list Unity of Beirut supported by March 14 and Amal (Now Media 2010).

international connections. While these groups are largely based in the core areas of Hezbollah's influence – Dahyeh, the Bekaa Valley and the South of Lebanon – they also have very strong links with Shi'a communities in the diaspora (particularly Africa). Pearlman describes this phenomenon well:

“A long history of migration linked South Lebanon to Africa, where developing economies, minimal competition, and scant regulation enabled entrepreneurial migrants to make great profits with little formal education. Observers noted that, given these dimensions of African countries as destinations, émigrés maintained close ties and returned to Lebanon more than migrants to Europe or the Americas. Some returned to become a “nouveau riche” in the South, where they bought land and built commercial enterprises... Émigrés invested capital in banks, industries, real estate, and other business ventures. In some towns and villages neglected by the state, returned migrants assumed leadership over socioeconomic development.” (Pearlman 2013:117)

These links with the Shi'a diaspora have provided important opportunities for the community's emerging bourgeoisie. Indeed, the exceptions just noted for Shi'a involvement in the financial sector have arisen largely as a result of these diaspora links. Both the JTB and the MEAB were initially based in Africa, where prosperous Shi'a businesspeople opened banks to provide services to expatriate communities, and also financed trade to Lebanon itself. As the founder of JTB notes:

“The Bank increased considerably its capital and services in Lebanon and abroad, especially in Africa towards the expatriate communities. JTB has developed a reputation for supporting both Lebanon's SME markets through commercial lending and Africa's Lebanese diaspora through a large-scale trade finance in more than one West and Central African country. To enhance such ties, alongside a significant share of the Lebanese market for small business loans, the bank has set up representative

offices in Nigeria and the Ivory Coast. While on the drawing board our plans for expanding JTB's African presence to cover several countries over the coming years, as well as in Europe.”
(Jamal Trust Bank 2014)

In the case of MEAB, the owners Hassan and Kassem Hejeij originally left Lebanon and built a large construction business in Africa. They extended their activities to other businesses before establishing the bank in 1991 (MEAB 2014). In 1993, the two brothers founded SOCOFI BTP, which has grown to oversee the majority of key civil constructions projects in Gabon.¹¹⁹ Kassem Hejeij is also the CEO SEGUIBAT SA, a leading civil construction company in Equatorial Guinea, while Hassan Hejeij served as CEO and founder of a Gabonese construction company before 1991 (MEAB 2014). Similarly, the Achour Group, which controls Fenicia Bank, is heavily invested in real estate and manufacturing in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and to a lesser extent in Angola, Romania and France (Cochrane 2014).

These three characteristics of the emerging Shi'a fraction of the bourgeoisie – an emphasis on real estate and trade, a relative weakness in the financial sector, and linkages with Shi'a diaspora populations – have been further accentuated by economic policies supported by Hezbollah in its areas of influence. A majority of the companies listed in the Annex, for example, have their headquarters in Hezbollah-controlled municipalities such as Ghobeyri. In these areas, they have benefited from the types of neoliberal urban redevelopment models discussed in the previous chapter. Moreover, Hezbollah's ministerial representatives have promoted economic policies, particularly concerning trade, that have facilitated the activities of Shi'a controlled conglomerates – most recently in 2014 when the Hezbollah minister Hussein Hassan was the main actor pushing for an eventually successful 50 percent decrease in export tax (NNA 2014a). Through policies such as these, Hezbollah has facilitated the accumulation of opportunities for the Shi'a conglomerates discussed in this chapter. Moreover, Hezbollah has increasingly emphasized the strengthening of links with the Shi'a diaspora, especially in Africa, where it now provides loans for young entrepreneurs to establish businesses (Leichtman 2010:281).¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Hassan Hejeij was well known in Gabon to be a close advisor to the President Omar Bongo (Meunier 2009).

¹²⁰ The Ivory Coast is the country in Africa with the largest Lebanese community of more than 60,000, with

While the main levers of Lebanon's economy remain in control by conglomerates of the Sunni and Christian fractions of the bourgeoisie, the emerging Shi'a economic fraction is a striking development that has paralleled the rise of Hezbollah as a political force.

4.5 Hezbollah's Own Economic Development

In addition to these privately owned Shi'a conglomerates, another significant feature of business activity in Lebanon is the increasing prominence of companies under Hezbollah's direct influence. Already in the beginning of the 1990s, Mona Harb (1996) had actually noticed that the associations and organisations linked to Hezbollah dealt often with private architectural offices and companies whose officials were sympathizers of the Islamic movement.

As with the conglomerates listed in the Annex, these companies have tended to focus upon construction and real estate, as well as tourism and recreational activities aimed at a growing Shi'a fraction of the middle class.¹²¹ In many cases, these companies have been involved in real estate development targeting prosperous Shi'a migrants as far afield as Michigan or Australia (Beydoun 1989 cited in Pearlman 2013:123). The South of Lebanon, in particular, experienced a booming real estate market that a recent report described as "village after village [of] palatial-looking villas", despite the fact that "many of them [were] empty" (Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) 2013). Most of these villas were built by Lebanese in the diaspora as monuments of their successes abroad (Pearlman 2013:123). Hezbollah is well aware of the economic power of the growing Shi'a fraction of the middle class as is demonstrated by the following words of a prominent Hezbollah member interviewed by M. Harb and L. Deeb: "We are a big powerful consumer movement that attracts big investors" (Deeb and Harb 2013:55).

Shi'a ranging from 80 to 90 percent of the total of the Lebanese population in the country (Bierwirth 1999:88).

¹²¹ Hezbollah's expansion in these areas is partially linked to a growth in religious tourism that caters to both Lebanese and non-Lebanese Arabs and Muslims, including student groups, academics, political delegations, and casual vacationers, who incorporate visits to sites into their trips to Beirut and the Lebanese coast. The description of tourism has evolved among Hezbollah officials from "jihadi tourism" to "*conservative tourism*" (*siyyāha muhāfidha*) and to the most recent "*purposeful tourism*" (*siyyāha hādifa*), all of which contain both ideological and market driven imperatives (Deeb and Harb 2011:40).

There are four companies under Hezbollah's direct influence that provide an excellent illustration of these trends. The first of these is Tajco, a real estate development company owned by Shi'a businessman Ali Tajjedine. The Tajjedine family has operated real estate, diamond export, supermarket and food processing businesses across Angola, Gambia, Sierra Leone and the Congo for many years.¹²² Ali Tajjedine is a former Hezbollah military commander who worked in trade and real estate in these countries before becoming owner of Tajco (Traboulsi 2014:90). One of the main missions of Tajco is to act as an intermediary for Hezbollah to purchase lands and it is also involved in construction and civil engineering works.¹²³ In 2007, Tajco purchased a 2.2 million-square-meter farm near the villages of Rayhan and Al-Qatraneh close to the city of Jezzine (Farrel 2012), which will welcome a new community called Ahmadiyah with houses and shops surrounding a stone quarry owned by Tajjedine (Blanford 2007). The current Minister of Industry and Hezbollah member Hussein Hajj Hassan declared at the time that this would accommodate the "natural growth" of Lebanon's Shi'a population and buttress "resistance" against Israel (Williams 2007). Tajjedine has also bought lands in Dalhamiyeh, in the Bekaa Valley, with the goal of launching further residential projects (Farrel 2012).

A second large construction company linked to Hezbollah is the Al-Inmaa group, which has been involved in the construction of numerous Hezbollah projects and one of the partners of the company is Amin Chirri, who was Hezbollah's MP in parliament between 2005 and 2009 (Deeb and Harb 2013:71). Inmaa defines itself as an "Engineering & Construction company and a leading investment group in Lebanon" (Al-Inmaa Engineering and Contracting 2013a), which employs more than 1200 employees spread across different branches. Its projects are concentrated in Shi'a populated regions, especially in Dahyeh (notably Bir Hassan, Haret Hreik, Shiah) and the South of Lebanon. Lara Deeb and Mona Harb (2013:88) explain that the company started its activities in the beginning of the 1990s building relatively affordable housing complexes in Dahyeh and then progressively began catering to more affluent customers, with middle and high end buildings in Dahyeh's

¹²² Ali Tajjedine and two of his brothers have been accused by the United States Department of the Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of providing support to Hezbollah.

¹²³ Tajco is involved in the building of residential complex, malls, resort (Al-Nasim Resort), education institutions, Artesian well, etc... all of these projects being based in their majority in Dahyeh and South Lebanon, or in areas with expanding Shi'a population such as Choueifat (Tajco Construction and Development 2013).

neighbourhoods.

The close linkages between al-Inmaa and Hezbollah's political structures is confirmed by its CEO, Adham Tababja (Janoubia 2012), who is also the Mayor of the Kafr Tabnit municipality and is affiliated to Hezbollah (Bint Jbeil 2010; Nejm 2010). Moreover, Tababja is Vice President of the al-Ahed football club (Al-Akhbar 2011), which is sponsored by Hezbollah (Daher 2014:170), and a shareholder of the Lebanese Media Group, Hezbollah's parent company for al-Manar Television and al-Nour Radio (see following chapter for more description of these media groups) (Wikileaks 2009). The director of Al-Inmaa group in South Lebanon is Ali Tababja, who is also the President of the Employers Association of Restaurants, Parks and Tourism Companies in the South (Al-Ainin 2008), and the Vice President of the Lebanese Federation of tourism unions (Itihâd Al-Wafâ':2014). Mona Harb and Lara Deeb (2013:88) also state that kinship relations with Hezbollah members have facilitated the company's contracting work and growth over the years.

The scale of Inmaa's construction activities and its linkages with the reworking of urban space in Hezbollah-controlled areas can be seen in the company's project portfolio. In Dahyeh, the group built an amusement park (Fantasy-World), which includes restaurants and coffee shops targeting a pious clientele. Hezbollah Mayor of Ghobeyri participated in the planning and facilitated the legal processes necessary for the project's implementation (Deeb and Harb 2009:199). Inmaa has also built restaurants and amusements centres in the Bir Abed neighbourhood (Family house), Saida (World of Joy), Tyr (City of Joy), Hadath (New Land), Baalbek (Restaurant al-Rawabi), Bint Jbeil (Family Park) and Nabatieh (Joy) (Al-Ainin 2008). These projects include gyms, pools, saunas, and massage rooms (Deeb and Harb 2008). In the city of Taybe in Baalbek, Inmaa built a summer tourist resort aimed at attracting religious families on vacation (Le Thomas 2012b:290). It has also built the Hezbollah-controlled al-Mehdi school in Hadath (Al-Inmaa Engineering and Contracting 2013b), the Hezbollah radio building (Radio Nour) in Haret Hreik (Al-Inmaa Engineering and Contracting 2013c) and a number of residential buildings. In recent years, Inmaa has been involved in operating international projects, including the Maxime Restaurant in Dubai (Al-Inmaa Engineering and Contracting 2013d).

Another important Hezbollah-linked company is Meamar Engineer and Development, which was founded in 1988 (Meamar 2014). Since that time, Meamar has been involved in more than 150 projects including: sporting facilities, Shi'a religious institutions, schools and hospitals. For these projects, Meamar's clients are almost exclusively organisations linked to Hezbollah, such as the Islamic Health Society, the Iranian Committee for the Reconstruction of Lebanon (ICRL), the Mehdi Scouts, the Shahid Association, the Islamic Religious Education Association (IREA) and municipalities controlled by Hezbollah Mayors (such as Ghobeyri and Bint Jbeil). At the celebration of the company's 25th anniversary, many Hezbollah members were present including Muhammad Raad, head of the Hezbollah Deputy bloc in parliament, Muhammad Fneich, Minister of Administrative Development, and the two Deputies Ali Fayyad and Ali Mekdad (Meamar 2014).¹²⁴ The event was prominently covered on Hezbollah's Manar TV (2014) and in the party's magazine (Al-Amal al-Baladi 2013:42).

The final enterprise linked to the party is the Arch Consulting Company, which was previously part of Jihad al-Bina (Hezbollah's construction organisation) but separated as an independent company in 2005 (Nasr 2011). Arch is registered under the name of Walid Ali Jaber (Arch company 2014) who was a Hezbollah-supported candidate in the Burj Al-Barajneh's municipal elections in 2004 (Al-Ahed News 2004). As with Meamar, Arch has built hospitals, schools and religious institutions in Hezbollah-controlled areas in Beirut, South Lebanon and the Bekaa (Arch 2014).¹²⁵ It is also involved in tourism, infrastructure, and hydraulic projects. Internationally, Arch company built the Abidjan Islamic Cultural Centre in the Ivory Coast managed by al-Ghadir Association (Arch 2014), a Shi'a religious association established by a supporter of Hezbollah (Mieu 2009; Pompey 2009).

These companies offer important insights into the nature of Hezbollah's economic activities. Each of them is privately-owned and operated and thus help to enrich a narrow layer of the Shi'a community who control them. At the same time, they are very closely linked to the party itself; all four companies are headed by Hezbollah

¹²⁴ In the pictures of the celebration we can see clearly that Hezbollah Deputies and Ministers are put forward.

¹²⁵ These include the Psychiatric Hospital, in Khalde, the Beirut Cardiac institute and Ragheb Harb Hospital in South Lebanon close to Nabatieh (client Shahid Association), the Bathoul Hospital and Sohmor Hospital in the Bekaa (client Islamic Health Society), and numerous buildings for al-Mahdi schools.

members and supporters, including electoral candidates for the party. Their projects are largely based in Hezbollah-controlled areas with clients mostly drawn from Hezbollah's educational, media and schooling institutions. Hezbollah officials frequently praise these institutions in publicly organised celebrations.¹²⁶ Indeed, the close links between Hezbollah and these companies have led to public concerns being expressed around clientelism and patronage stemming from the party's position in the state apparatus.¹²⁷ The explicit and open nature of their relationship with the party is one further indication of the network of private sector institutions that have arisen around construction and real estate activities in Shi'a populated areas, and points to the emergence of a bourgeoisie linked to Hezbollah.

The investments in the construction and real estate sectors of Hezbollah affiliated companies or under its influence in Lebanon corresponds and reflects the nature of an adventurous, speculative and commercial capitalism that dominates the region, which is characterised by short term profit seeking as explained by Gilbert Achcar (2013a:102). The construction and real estate sector, which is a successful economic branch in the region, is at the crossroads of land speculation, driven by (1) the search for shelter investments in real estate and (2) an economy of commercial and touristic services funded greatly by the regional oil revenues, both by the capital and consumers alike from rentier states.

4.6 The Changing Character of Hezbollah's Social Base

The preceding discussion provides confirmation of the expanding social base of Hezbollah. From its roots in the poor Shi'a populations of Lebanon, Hezbollah has become a party whose membership and cadres increasingly reflect the growing Shi'a fraction of the middle class and bourgeoisie – especially in Beirut.¹²⁸ In the southern suburbs of Beirut, many members of wealthier families and most of the merchants

¹²⁶ For example at the opening of the Ceremony Hall of the Martyr Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr, the head of the Hezbollah executive council Hisham Safieddinne honoured and thanked Inmaa, Meamar Engineering and Development company, and Arch Consulting (Al-Mahdi 2012).

¹²⁷ For example, the municipalities under the control of Hezbollah or its allies have increasingly used these companies for construction activities. The Wa'd Reconstruction Project, discussed in the following chapter, also relied heavily on these companies.

¹²⁸ In addition regarding the large amount of Hezbollah's employees (see chapter 5), Gilbert Achcar argues that "even if some of them are of proletarian background, the fact of becoming salaried cadres of such an organisation means a social upgrade, constituting a petty-bourgeois mentality" (cited in Macdonald 2012:31).

have been integrated into Hezbollah (Abisaab M. and Abisaab R. 2014:133), while the party's activities and institutions (particularly those connected to tourism and leisure) cater to middle class Shi'a.

This transformation is reflected in the profile of party cadres, who are no longer composed of clerics from a lower middle class background as at the time of the party's foundation in 1985, but are now largely drawn from a professional class who hold secular higher education degrees. One illustration of this is the party's increasing weight in professional associations (Qassir 2011). The Order of Engineers and Architects, for example, has been dominated by Hezbollah since 2008 when the party won the most votes in the association's elections (Bou Dagher 2008). Hezbollah estimated that at least 1300 engineers were members of the party in 2006 (Al-Akhbar 2006). The high numbers of engineers in Hezbollah is linked to the reconstruction of the South and Dahyeh following the various wars, especially after the end of the Civil War and the 2006 war and the development of the real estate projects in these regions.

In the Medical Doctors Association, Hezbollah was represented on the winning list in the 2013 elections (Shibani 2013). Likewise, in the Lebanese Dentist Association, Vice President Muhammad Kataya is supported by Hezbollah (Now Media 2011; Lebanese Dentist Association 2014). In the Lebanese Pharmacist Order, which has 7,000 registered members (El-Shark Online 2012), a Hezbollah representative narrowly missed out from winning leadership of the union in the 2012 elections – losing by only 131 votes to a Future Movement-backed candidate (Hamdan 2012). The only exception to this trend is the Lawyer's Association, where despite expanding numbers and an increasing challenge to the Amal-controlled leadership, Hezbollah has not managed to become dominant (Al-Nahar 2013).

Similarly, Hezbollah's political leaders are typically drawn from well-educated and wealthy layers of the Shi'a community. In the national elections of 2009, for example, five of the ten elected Hezbollah deputies held doctoral degrees and at least four others were involved in prominent Lebanese businesses.¹²⁹ The longest serving

¹²⁹The five deputies with PhDs were Ali Mekdad, Hassan Fadlallah, Nawaf Mussawi, Ali Fayyad and Hussein Hajj Hassan. In terms of business interests, Nawwar Sahili is a board member of the Syrian Lebanese

Hezbollah Deputy, Ali Ammar, comes from one of the wealthiest families in Burj Al-Barajneh (Karim 1998:211).¹³⁰ At the municipal level, these patterns are repeated, with Hezbollah electoral candidates selected from powerful Shi'a families such as Al-Khansa, Kazma, Kanj, Kumati, Farhat, Rahhal and Slim (see Table below) (Harb 2010).

Important families of Dahyeh linked to Hezbollah¹³¹

Families	Names and Links to Hezbollah
Al-Khansa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Muhammad Said Al-Khansa (Member of Hezbollah, and Mayor of Ghobeyri) - Sayyid Ali Ahmad Al-Khansa (On the list supported by Hezbollah of "The sons of Ghobeyri" municipal elections 2004 and 2010) - Qassem Muhammad Al-Khansa (On the list supported by Hezbollah of "The sons of Ghobeyri" municipal elections 2010)
Kazma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sayyid Muhammad Wafik Kazma (On the list supported by Hezbollah of "The sons of Ghobeiri" municipal elections 2004 and 2010)
Kanj	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sayyid Hassan Jamil Kanj (On the list supported by Hezbollah of "The sons of Ghobeyri" municipal elections 2004) - Engineer Firas Kanj (On the list supported by Hezbollah of "The sons of Ghobeyri" municipal elections 2004)
Komati	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hajj Saleh Ali Komati (On the list supported by Hezbollah of "The sons of Haret Hreik" municipal elections 2004) - Muhammad Komati (member of the political bureau of Hezbollah)
Farhat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wissam Fahd Farhat (On the list supported by Hezbollah of "The sons of Burj Al-Barajneh" municipal elections 2004) - Hajj Ali Farhat (head of the real estate and engineer company Inchaat, close to Hezbollah)

Commercial Bank, Muhammad Raad and Muhammad Fneich are shareholders in the Lebanese Media Group, and Hajj Hassan runs two private schools in Beirut.

¹³⁰ Ammar has been elected every year since 1992, with the exception of 1996. His uncle, Mahmoud Ammar was also a former Deputy from 1957 to 1992 and close to former Lebanese President Camille Chamoun (Karim 1998:211).

¹³¹ Sources: Al-Ahed News 2004; Janoubia 2012

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bilal Farhat (Hezbollah Deputy) - Gazua Farhat (On the list supported by Hezbollah of “The sons of Ghobeyri” municipal elections 2004)
Rahhal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Abbas Rahhal (He was the head of Al-Manar's Media Relations Unit and news chief editor) - Ahmed Kamal Rahal (On the list supported by Hezbollah of “The sons of Burj Al-Barajneh” municipal elections 2004) - Hussein Rahhal (Hezbollah’s former media advisor and was appointed official in charge of Hizballah electronic media in 2009)
Slim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ali Slim Slim (On the list supported by Hezbollah of “The sons of Haret Hreik” municipal elections 2004) - Hajj Ahmed Youssef Slim (On the list supported by Hezbollah of “The sons of Burj Al-Barajneh” municipal elections 2004) - Khalil Hussein Dib Slim (On the list supported by Hezbollah of “The sons of Ghobeyri” municipal elections 2004) - Riyadh Slim (On the list supported by Hezbollah of “The sons of Ghobeyri” municipal elections 2004)

Even at the supporter and sympathiser levels these same trends can be noted. Today, heterogeneous layers of society perceive Hezbollah in different ways. Judith Palmer Harik (1996:55), a professor at the American University of Beirut (AUB), has examined this social diversity of Hezbollah support. She found that beginning in the mid 1990s, supporters of the party could be found throughout all social classes, and were no longer largely restricted to the poorer, pious layers of the Shi’a population. This trajectory continued through the 2000s, as indicated by the party’s very high results in the 2009 legislative elections from areas that were not traditionally poorer Shi’a communities, such as Nabatieh and Jbeil.¹³² In an interview for this thesis, Abd Al-Halim Fadlallah (2012b) also confirmed that a large number of youth from the middle and higher classes of the Shi’a population now support (or have joined) the party – including tribal elites in the Bekaa Valley who were traditionally opposed to Hezbollah.

¹³² The levels of lower and upper poverty lines were in 2005 respectively of 1.05 percent and 11.37 percent in Nabatieh (more than 95 percent of Shi’a) and of 0.9 percent and 2.93 percent in Keserwan/Jbeil (composed of 20 percent of Shi’a) (UNDP 2008b).

In its educational network, the changing characteristics of Hezbollah's social base is indicated by the very high tuition fees required to attend its al-Mustapha schools under the control of Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem. According to Catherine Le Thomas (2012a:179), these schools are aimed at the children of the party's leadership, as well as upper and middle-class fraction of the Shi'a population. The al-Bathoul school, a girls' school that forms part of the al-Mustapha network, has annual fees of around \$1,600, an amount that is unaffordable for the majority of Lebanese (Le Thomas 2012a:179). Le Thomas concludes that "the al-Mustapha network of schools, which can be considered as being part of the upper middle class category of Hezbollah schools, provide a service to the wealthy Shi'a class and spread the political ideology of the party under Naim Qassem's supervision" (Le Thomas 2012a:142-143).¹³³

These characteristics of Hezbollah's political representation and social base indicate that while the organisation continues to draw support from people from all levels of society, its priorities are increasingly oriented to the highest strata. Hezbollah MP Ali Fayyad acknowledged this trend in 2010, when he remarked that "Hezbollah is not a small party anymore, it's a whole society. It is the party of the poor people, yes, but at the same time there are a lot of businessmen in the party, we have a lot of rich people, some from the elite class" (Hersh 2010). Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah also provided indirect confirmation of these trends in a September 2009 speech, in which he urged members to quit the "love of luxury", and called on them to adopt belief in God simply because of "fear of the end" (Al-Insaniyyah 2009).

4.7 Conclusion

The post Civil War period witnessed the growing political and economic importance of the Shi'a population in Lebanon. This chapter has shown that Shi'a dominated regions are no longer the most impoverished (although poverty is still present in

¹³³ In addition to this, other Hezbollah institutions orient towards wealthier layers of the Shi'a population. One example is the hospital Rasul Al-Azam, which provides VIP and "Super Suites" rooms for patients. The hospital website states: "It is true that medical care is a basic service, but the administration's center does not forget to provide the best hotel services to their patients by having two wings of VIP, and two wings of Super Suite" (Al-Rasul Al-Azam 2014).

these areas) but rather that the Sunni-populated regions in the North have been the worst affected by the deepening of neoliberalism. In Dahyeh, the South of Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley, an emerging Shi'a fraction of the bourgeoisie grew alongside the opportunities presented by neoliberal reform and the reconstruction funds that followed in the wake of 2006. This was indicated by an expanding presence of the Shi'a fraction of the bourgeoisie in various business associations.

Hezbollah, as the most important representative of the Shi'a population in Lebanon, was influenced by these socio-economic transformations in three respects. Firstly, by the development and increasing presence of cadres coming from more privileged backgrounds and educated in secular universities, in contrast to the situation prevailing when the party was founded by religious clerics and people from a lower socio-economic background. Secondly, the party has formed close connections with the wealthier layers of the Shi'a population and elite families, indicated through its political alliances in elections in places such as Dahyeh. Third, Hezbollah has itself become an important economic actor in Lebanon, with multiple business interests that provided employment to thousands of people in addition to its network of organisations.

The analysis of the context and the changes in the Lebanese economic and social structures are key elements to an understanding of Hezbollah's behaviour and policies. They indicate that the party itself has undergone a profound transformation from an organisation firmly rooted in poorer Shi'a areas to one that increasingly represents the interests of a wealthier Shi'a constituency and that competes with Amal to best serve the interests of the Shi'a fraction of the bourgeoisie. There is indeed an increased competition between Amal and Hezbollah to attract the most wealthiest sectors of the Shi'a fraction of the bourgeoisie and best represent its interests in Lebanon.

Chapter 5: Hezbollah and Shi'a Civil Society

5.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the process through which Hezbollah has managed to achieve a position of hegemony in the Shi'a population. This hegemony was reached through a balanced combination of consent and coercion, based on the one hand through its provision of much needed services to large sections of the Shi'a popular sector, and on the other, through repressive measures directed against those who step outside the norms established by the party.

These intertwined factors of consent and coercion are facilitated through Hezbollah's wide-ranging network of organisations, which has helped it disseminate its ideas and deepen its support base within the Shi'a population. Hezbollah's parliamentary Deputy, Dr. Ali Fayyad, has claimed that "the organisations of Hezbollah were established to build a solid relation between the party and its public; they are one of the essential elements in its strategy of mobilisation" (1998 cited in Harb 2010:97). This network of institutions provides a wide array of services in fields such as education, finance, health, culture, religion and tourism. These services were initially organised in associative structures established in the 1980s but have expanded considerably since that time. Many of these organisations were affiliated with Iranian organisations and were developed through financial assistance from Iran and its Islamic charity networks. Although some of these organisations have autonomous administrative councils and considerable latitude in the programmes they offer, they are required to follow the political and cultural orientation of Hezbollah.

This chapter demonstrates that Hezbollah's organisations can be seen as part of what Gramsci described as the "multi-layered associations and voluntary groups" that constitute civil society: associations, educational and religious institutions, the media, and so forth (Fontana 2008:93). These institutions constitute a "hegemonic apparatus ... a complex set of institutions, ideologies, practices and agents (including the "intellectuals")" (Thomas 2009:225), through which Hezbollah has engaged its opponents in the struggle for political power by intervening in civil society. As Peter

Thomas has noted, the struggle for political power depends not simply on “the ability of a class’s initiative in political society” but is also related to whether it can “relate adequately to its 'social basis' in civil society... Political power is immanent to the hegemonic projects by means of which classes constitutes themselves as classes (relations within classes) capable of exercising political power (as opposed to an incoherent mass of corporative interest confined to the terrain of civil society)” (Thomas 2009: 226-227).

Hezbollah’s institutional network also deserves a Gramscian description of ‘hegemonic apparatus’ because it operates to a very pronounced degree as a coherent interlocked whole. There is significant rotation of leadership among the institutions, which also provide employment to the cadres and popular base of the party.¹³⁴ This network means that individual institutions reinforce each other’s activities – the construction wing of the party Jihad al-Bina (see below) builds the organisation’s schools, while Hezbollah religious centres and institutions provide them with books and instructors. The party’s media wing publicises the organisation’s reconstruction activities and religious message. Its research unit helps to plan social interventions and provides employment for graduates from its educational institutions. In this manner, Hezbollah’s institutions represent a unified and coherent intervention into Lebanese civil society.

One striking aspect of this coherence is the ideological framework propagated through the organisation’s network of civil society institutions. The principal element of this framework is the on-going and deepening Islamization of the Shi’a population, which has been vital to strengthening Hezbollah’s hegemony. Hezbollah’s socialisation structures have been primarily aimed at strengthening the religiosity of its social environment, thereby fostering an adherence of the community to the organisation as the embodiment of Islamic values (understood, as discussed below, through a particularly distinctive variant of Islam). Islamization has been both

¹³⁴ One prominent cadre of the party was, for example, successively director of the party’s construction wing, Jihad al-Bina (see below), the party’s research unit and its television station. The head of the organisation’s Shahid association was previously director of Jihad al-Bina. The current Mayor of the Ghobeyri municipality, Muhammad Al-Khansa, was at the head of Hezbollah social services. Dr. Hassan Fadlallah, currently a MP, has been occupying various functions in the media wing of the party, working successively in the weekly newspaper of the party *al-Ahed*, then the radio station al-Nour and finally in the television channel al-Manar.

promoted by Hezbollah organisations, while, simultaneously employed as a means of disciplining elements of the Shi'a population that have resisted this process. It is through these twin elements of consent and coercion, mediated through the vehicle of Islamization, that Hezbollah has developed its hegemonic position amongst Lebanese Shi'a.

This chapter will demonstrate that the internal structure of Hezbollah can be compared to Althusser's State Apparatus (SA), which includes: the government, the administration, the army, police, courts, prisons, etc... These institutions constitute what we call the repressive SA. The repressive feature indicates that the SA in question operates prevalently through violence, at least to a certain extent (as repression, administrative for example, can take non-physical forms) (Althusser 1976). We will analyse the army and military aspects in chapter 7. Secondly, I will look at Hezbollah's network of organisations, which reflects the plurality of the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), as explained by Althusser (1976): the schools apparatus, the religious apparatus, the family apparatus, the trade union apparatus, the media apparatus, the cultural apparatus, etc... All these apparatuses can be found in Hezbollah. The network of organisations of Hezbollah corresponds to the purpose of the ISA, in other words as a tool similar to the repressive SA for the ruling class to maintain its hegemony, as argued by Althusser (1976). In Hezbollah's network of organisations, each singular entity serves a particular purpose in the project of hegemony of the Islamic movement. The dominant ISA, which diffuses the dominant ideology to a large public with the most efficiency, is considered by Althusser to be school, which is an important element in Hezbollah's network of organisations. Despite the diversity of Hezbollah's organisations, what unifies them is that they follow and diffuse the ideology promoted by the Islamic movement, which has become the dominant ideology inside the Lebanese Shi'a population today.

The chapter begins by outlining the organisational composition of Hezbollah itself, which needs to be understood as integrally connected to its wider intervention in the Shi'a population. The party is tightly centralised and hierarchical, structured in a nested, pyramid-like form that transmits decisions and political orientation seamlessly from top to bottom. This structure then interfaces with a broader set of civil society

organisations branching out through Shi'a areas. The chapter then turns to examining four priority areas of this intervention in Lebanese civil society: social support activities, religious institutions, media and culture, and the education/youth sector. In each of these sectors, the concrete activities of the main Hezbollah institutions are discussed, followed by their significance to the development of Hezbollah's hegemony within the Shi'a population. The second half of the chapter draws together the main ideological threads of this hegemonic apparatus. It focuses, in particular, on the collective and individual norms articulated by Hezbollah in the concepts of *hâla islâmiyya* and *iltizâm*. These norms have a highly gendered component, and help to enact the consensual and coercive aspects of the party's intervention in Lebanese civil society.

5.2 Hezbollah's Structure and Relationship to Civil Society

An important facet to understanding Hezbollah's intervention in civil society, and the Shi'a population more generally, is the organisation's internal structure. This structure is defined by an extreme centralisation and concern with hierarchy and discipline (ICG 2003:2), features that enable the ideological and political orientation of the party to be consciously and systematically transmitted to its wider social environment. This structure is also marked by the predominance of religious clerics in its upper leadership, further confirmation of the significance that specific religio-ideological conceptions have on the organisation's political practice (Hazmeh 1993:325).

The highest decision-making body of the party is the "Decision Making Consultative Council" (*Majlis Shura al-Qarâr*) known as the Shura, which is composed of seven members: the Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, the Vice Secretary Naim Qassem, and five other cadres. In the Shura, decisions are usually reached by consensus and only occasionally through a formal vote. Resulting directives are binding on the movement's constituent bodies (ICG 2003:2). The Shura is elected every three years not by the party rank and file members but by the General Convention (*al-Mu'tamar al-'âm*), which gathers according to different sources between 200 to 250 high cadres, and includes heads of various sections, geographical regions and units of work (Daher 2014:195). The last General

Convention was held in 2008-2009, with the 2012 meeting postponed due to the conflict in Syria (Al-Monitor 2013). In addition to electing the Shura, the General Convention discusses general policies of the party regarding the party's daily operations in Lebanon, and its relations with Shi'a constituencies and other Lebanese political forces.

The Shura forms the main core of the party's strategic intervention in civil society and its wider political orientation. This role is carried out through five councils, each headed by one of the Shura members, who are joined by other key cadres. Daher (2014) describes these councils as follows:

- The Executive Council (EC), composed of twelve members. The EC defines the public action of the party together with its foreign policy. The members of the EC are generally regional party leaders and/or members in charge of specific sectoral policies (media, health, social, education and so forth).
- The Political Council (PC), which is in charge of communication and coordination with the other Lebanese political and social actors. The PC analyses the general political situation and provides analysis and recommendations to the Shura. In addition to conjunctural political debates, the PC administers permanent 'files' on subjects such as relationships with Christian and Islamic parties, Palestinian factions and Arab countries.
- The Jihad Council (JC), which runs the military resistance and the security apparatus of the party. The JC is responsible for the security of the members of the resistance and its arms, notably through the surveillance of alleged collaborators.
- The Judicial Council (JudC), which brings together different clerics from the various regions of Lebanon and passes rulings on aspects of religious law.
- The Parliamentary Work Council (PWC), which gathers Hezbollah members of parliament to coordinate their political interventions and the communication of decisions. A sub-council was added to this in 2005, the Government Work Council, which includes consultants specialised in certain sectors. (Daher 2014: 193-195)

In turn, these councils oversee a further tier of committees that involve other party cadres tasked with implementing selected policies. In addition to these councils and committees, two new organisations were established in 2004: (1) the CCSD, the Hezbollah-affiliated think tank based in Beirut, responsible for social, development and economic research and programs, and (2) The Federation of Hezbollah Municipalities, an organisation that links together Hezbollah municipalities in order to strengthen coordination between them (Harb 2010:88).¹³⁵

These nation-wide structures are complimented at the regional level by district councils, called the Regional Shura Councils, which are supervised by members of the Shura. Their main responsibility is to follow up on the daily activities and needs of the district (Hazmeh 1993:327). In each district, Hezbollah members are organised in groups (*majmu'ât*) of between 30 to 35 persons, based on individual neighbourhoods (Daher 2014:191). These groups coordinate through factions (*fasâ'il*), networks of 4-5 groups that represent a small city or set of villages and report to the Regional Shura Council (Daher 2014:191).

At the same time the ideology of the Wilâyat al-Faqîh plays an important role in the internal coherence and discipline of the party. Membership in the Islamic movement is conditional on allegiance to the Wilâyat al-Faqîh and respect for the implementation of its decision among the leadership and its cadres. A high cadre actually acknowledged that the Wilâyat al-Faqîh has played a very positive role in the realization of internal discipline as an outcome of the religious respect of this principle, guaranteeing the unity of ranks inside the organisation (2005 cited in Daher 2014:216).

The picture that emerges from this structure is a tightly organised and highly hierarchical party, which clearly transmits decisions and their implementation from the top to the individual member. In an interview conducted for this thesis Abd Al-Halim Fadlallah (2012a), the Director of CCSD, confirmed this conclusion. He described the party as a pyramidal organisation in which debate is limited to the highest ranks of the party. Decisions are communicated to members through the

¹³⁵ Leaders of both of these organisations were interviewed for this thesis.

official structures described above, and cadres are also responsible for meeting with sympathisers in order to explain the official positions of the party (Fadlallah 2012b). Hezbollah leader *Sheikh* Naim Qassem has likewise stated:

“affiliation to the party is realised, in the various sectors, through its direct structure, by all individuals accepting totally and completely the objectives of the party, a member is committed to implement organisational decisions, and dedicates the necessary time to achieve these obligations and possesses the personal qualities linked to faith, to the struggle and to behaviour, allowing him to strengthen the organisation, to develop his capacities, and to achieve its goals.” (Qassem 2008:86)

This pyramidal structure – organised at its core by the Shura – is thus the sole origin of the party’s policy and strategic orientation towards the wider Shi’a population. This orientation, however, is mediated through a range of civil society activities that enable the party to interface with supporters and non-members. The most important of these activities: social support, religious institutions, media/cultural activities, and education/youth work are discussed in the following section.

5.3 Social Support Activities of Hezbollah

A vital element in Hezbollah’s support among the Shi’a population has been its attempts to support the civil population following conflict and war, demonstrated, most notably, in the aftermath of the 2006 war with Israel (Alagha and Catusse 2008). The direct beneficiaries of the party’s resources and services, including employees and members in Beirut alone, are estimated to reach up to 30 to 40,000 people, according to some sources (Harb 2010:91; Traboulsi 2014:80).¹³⁶ Others have estimated the figure to be between 60,000 and 80,000, when factoring in the security and military apparatus (Nakhoul 2013).¹³⁷ In addition to this, the party offers

¹³⁶ F. Traboulsi (2014:80) estimated at around more than 35,000 the numbers of employees and full timers (working for the party) of Hezbollah working in the various institutions of the party, with Jihad Al-Bina accounting to around 10,000 workers.

¹³⁷ In a study report of Reuters on Hezbollah of Samia Nakhoul (2013), Hezbollah is said to pay salaries to

a range of social support to a wider layer of non-members and supporters in the Shi'a population.

This support includes direct financial aid through the organisation's 'good loan institution' (*mu'assasa Al-Qard al-Hassan*), which was established in 1982 and distributes loans without interest according to Islamic religious law (Alagha and Catusse 2008). This institution has 23 branches and around 300 employees distributed between Beirut, the Bekaa and the South (Al-Qard al-Hassan Association 2014). According to its website, *Al-Qard Al-Hassan* has lent more than \$245 million since 1983, in a total of over 700,000 loans, including 110,000 in 2013 alone (Al-Qard al-Hassan Association 2014b). These loans are funded through donations, religious taxes, administrative fees and subscriptions to the institution (Al-Qard al-Hassan Association 2014b). In 2012, the association had 150,000 subscribers who benefitted from preferential loans in exchange of paying a monthly subscription of 10,000 LP (\$6.66), and 35,000 people who contribute to the organisation (Al-Qard al-Hassan Association 2014b).

Much of Hezbollah's financial support aims at the provision of welfare to the most vulnerable and poor Shi'a populations. The Imdad organisation, established in 1987, provides health care, education and recreation services, support for orphans, emergency relief, income generating programs and small amount of financial aid for impoverished families (Al-Imdad 2014).

Another interesting means by which Hezbollah provides its welfare support are 'discount cards', which can be purchased for a small fee and then entitle the holder to significant price reductions in Hezbollah-affiliated shops and community services. The card al-Amir, for example, is distributed by the association "La Famille",¹³⁸ whose general director is Imad Wehbe, a graduate of Hezbollah's Mahdi school.¹³⁹ The card costs \$1, and provides discounts of up to 50 percent in a wide range of

60,000-80,000 people working for charities, schools, clinics and other institutions in addition to its military and security apparatus.

¹³⁸ The association La Famille was established in 2004 by a few persons who presented the idea to one of the officials in Hezbollah, who in turn gave positive feedback (Saqr 2008).

¹³⁹ Information retrieved on Imad Wehbe's personal facebook account (accessed 20 August 2014). A 2014 ceremony for the card was held under the auspices of the Hezbollah Minister of Industry Hussein Hajj Hassan (Al-Ahed News 2014a).

institutions such as “cooperatives, clothing shops, libraries, medical centers, sport centers, furniture house, electronic and electricity shops, and recreational centers, (including restaurants and coffee houses)” (Anonym 2012a; Hassan 2014; La Famille 2014). In this manner, Hezbollah not only reduces daily living costs for Shi’a families, but also provides support to local businesses (often Hezbollah-affiliated).¹⁴⁰ The card was first launched in Dahyeh in 2004-2005, and has now expanded to the South and the Bekaa, with around 75,000 people using the card by 2014 (Hassan 2014). Moreover, Hezbollah also distributes these cards as presents to Shi’a families who regularly attend the organisation’s cultural events, as well as military training (Saqr 2008).

Other kinds of discount cards are only available to Hezbollah members. One example of this is the al-Nour card, which can be obtained by members for a 20,000 LP (\$13) monthly subscription. According to a wife of a Hezbollah member interviewed for this thesis, the al-Nour Card allows its holders to benefit from price reductions in various Hezbollah-affiliated shops and warehouses, furniture shops entertainment locations, kindergartens, restaurants throughout the country and organised hajj pilgrimages (Anonym 2012a; Shamseddine 2012; El-Cheikh and Saghyieh 2013a).

Alongside these welfare activities and financial support to poorer Shi’a populations, perhaps the most striking example of the social support offered by Hezbollah has been its building efforts within Shi’a areas, particularly following the destruction of 2006. The implementing body for these building projects was the aforementioned Jihad al-Bina foundation, which was created in 1985 to assume responsibility for reconstruction during and after the Civil War (Hamzeh 2004:50-51). Between 1988 and 2002, Jihad al-Bina led the construction of 78 buildings and the rehabilitation of another 10,528 structures (including homes, schools, shops, hospitals, infirmaries, mosques, cultural centres and agricultural cooperatives), most of them in South Lebanon (Hamzeh 2004:50-51). Jihad al-Bina relies on financial assistance from its Iranian sister organisation as well as from Islamic charitable sources. In addition to

¹⁴⁰ La Famille (2014) states that the purpose of the card is “to ease the economic and social burdens on the life of people, especially the people from the reality of the social situation and living conditions that plague the Lebanese citizen”.

reconstruction, the organisation also helps provide water and electricity to Shi'a populations where the government is weak or absent. From 1988 to 2012, the Foundation distributed 8,095,055 barrels of water to 113 reservoirs in all regions of the southern suburbs, drawing periodically from a reservoir in Burj Abi Haidar (Jihad al-Bina Development Association 2013).

A few days following the 2006 war, Hezbollah distributed millions of dollars in cash for building purposes to thousands of families, a process described by Jihad al-Bina as follows:

“the housing compensations were paid according to the initial surveys of demolished buildings, which Jihad al-Bina was capable of accomplishing in an unprecedentedly short period of time. Compensation was settled without any complications to \$12,000 in Beirut (representing \$4,000 for rent allowance for the year, and \$8,000 for the furniture), \$10,000 in the South (\$2,000 for rent allowance for the year and \$8,000 for furniture). They settled the documents essential to identify the individuals and their demolished buildings, and in one month, compensations were paid to more than 12,000 individuals.” (Jihad al-Bina` Ma'an nabnî wa nuqâwim 2014)

The party's Executive Council was in charge of this distribution that took place in offices situated in schools and other buildings throughout the bombed neighbourhoods of the southern suburbs, South Lebanon and the Bekaa. Hundreds of volunteers helped expedite the process, covering 75 percent of the requests in 48 hours (Harb 2007:229).

Most of this activity focused on reconstruction of the Dahyeh neighbourhood, the principal urban base of the organisation. To this end, Jihad al-Bina established the project 'Wa'd' (Promise), which specifically targeted building in Dahyeh. According to the CCSD (2008b:67), Wa'd arose following numerous meetings between the residents of Dahyeh, whose homes had been destroyed during the war, and

Hezbollah cadres, in which 80 percent of the residents of destroyed homes decided to entrust Hezbollah and its teams of engineers with the reconstruction of the zone. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah explained how the process occurred in a speech on May 11 2012 to commemorate the conclusion of Wa'd:

“Then I met with the people – the owners of the residential units – you remember that. It was a beautiful and massive meeting in the Hall of Great Sayyida Khadeja (Peace be upon her) following the war. I presented to the people the decision as it is. There is no possibility that the state rebuild your houses. It will pay the compensations for the residential units and you have two choices:

The first choice is that residents of every building form a committee and agree among themselves to build the building and we are at your service. We will also help with financing and paying the differences and also improving the building because the money which will be paid by the state is not enough even to reconstruct the building as it was, and as well from building it better than it was. Of course we are at your service and we will not withdraw.

The other choice: we have a project and the institution will be charged on your behalf, by consulting you and cooperating with you, to reconstruct these buildings.

So we were before a democratic project, which is based on dialogue. No one has obliged anyone to do anything. No one imposed anything on anyone.” (Al-Manar 2012b)

Nasrallah's account, however, is challenged by Mona Harb, who was a member at the time of the Reconstruction Unit at the AUB (Harb 2007:229; Fawaz and Harb 2010:22). The members of this group tried to initiate a public debate on the reconstruction options in the neighbourhood of Haret Hreik (in Dahyeh), but their propositions were rejected by the Wa'd team (Fawaz and Harb 2010:2). Harb and another Beirut-based scholar, Mona Fawaz, have argued that Hezbollah controlled

the reconstruction process completely; involving only selected actors from its own apparatus. They claim that Hezbollah operated outside public institutions and even isolated the Haret Hreik elected local government from its decision-making structures (Fawaz and Harb 2010:30-31). In this manner, Hezbollah took responsibility for the reconstruction of Dahyeh and at the same time asserted its domination over this section of the city. The Wa'd project had the advantage of maintaining, and legitimising, the geographical integrity of Hezbollah's power base, while reinforcing the party's prestige because it was implemented by the party's development wing. Fawaz and Harb note:

“Dahyeh is Hezbollah's capital, the site of its institutional headquarters and of its governing councils. Its location in the city of Beirut gives it tactical weight and significant visibility that is capitalized upon in the party's mobilisation strategies and political decision making. Its reconstruction is thus an opportunity to reassert the party's dominance, especially amid acute life threatening challenges such as those unfolded in summer 2006. In Dahyeh, more than elsewhere, the act of reconstruction was hence an act of defiance and survival for Hezbollah. This largely explains the party's swift mobilization in the process.” (Fawaz and Harb 2010:21)

The Wa'd project indicates the way in which reconstruction has been utilised by Hezbollah as a major element in building a popular base of support in key Shi'a areas. Not only were the residents of Dahyeh supplied with desperately needed housing, but the reconstruction activities provided thousands of jobs in a community that consists of half a million Shi'a Lebanese. Moreover, the organisation's high profile activities in the area provided it with an enormous propaganda victory in the wake of the war. In this manner, reconstruction represented a potent symbol of the party's claims that it was the principal defender of the rights of the Shi'a community in Lebanon.

Nonetheless, despite the important social role that Wa'd (and reconstruction in general) has played in Shi'a areas, it is important to note that the model envisaged by

Hezbollah continued to emphasize market-driven and private property-based conceptions of urban space (Fawaz 2014:922-924). Mona Fawaz has highlighted this feature of Wa'd in Haret Hreik, pointing to the fact that the project was centred upon the assumption that the beneficiaries would be "property owners in the area, those who can produce a substantiated claim for property ownership" (Fawaz 2011:60). She notes that to view Haret Hreik "as only the sum of 200 private individual apartments is nonetheless quite problematic ... the neighbourhood was also, for example, the centre of economic and educational activities ... many other dwellers and visitors should be entitled to bring claims and participate in articulating a communal vision for what the neighbourhood was and the potential it has" (Fawaz 2011:60). The residents' desire for increased and better utilised public space – including "better sidewalks, more open spaces, playgrounds, less [traffic] congestion" (Fawaz 2011:60)¹⁴¹ – were ignored in the reconstruction plans, which instead emphasized the interests of retailers and owners of companies and institutions (CCSD 2008b:131-135). Moreover, in line with the arguments made in the previous two chapters, these reconstruction activities not only helped to consolidate Hezbollah's social base in Dahyeh (Fawaz 2009:332-334), but also acted to enrich those large construction conglomerates that were close to the party itself – companies not linked to the party were excluded from the lucrative contracts (Irving 2009).¹⁴²

5.4 Mosques, Hawzât and Religious Institutions

As noted in earlier chapters, the political elites of the Shi'a population, in other words the *zu'âma*, were significantly weakened during the Civil War as a consequence of the political and military strength of Amal and Hezbollah. In this context, new religious institutions were an important site of challenge to those existing elites who had typically monopolised religious learning and scholasticism. These new institutions included Hezbollah-affiliated mosques and *hawzât* (religious seminaries), which provided space for previously marginalised youth to enter religious vocations while

¹⁴¹ Fawaz also points out that residents were not consulted in the composition of the Wa'd board or the architects involved in the construction of their houses.

¹⁴² Hezbollah (in alliance with Amal) was criticised for its clientelist and patronage policies in this regard. Indeed, Riyadh Al-Assad, an important political figure in the South, declared that Hezbollah systematically refused reconstruction contracts for his company because of a veto from Nabih Berri (cited in ICG 2007:7).

simultaneously helping to disseminate Hezbollah's particular worldview and ideology. According to Rula Abisaab, the new *hawza*:

“posed a challenge to elitist and family-transmitted scholastic traditions in Jabal Amil and brought about a status reversal for displaced Shi'a youth from working-class backgrounds whose lives lacked the educational stability or socio-economic growth necessary for self-actualization. The seminary students who identify with Hezbollah are largely drawn from lower social classes and families that lack the traditions of Shi'a scholasticism. This challenge to the older traditions of learning must be seen against the background of overall socio-economic changes. An incremental process of rural deterioration in the Shi'a regions, combined with demographic change and marginalization at the hands of the Lebanese state, popularized new modes of thought, of which the Islamist cultural and political revolution represented by Hezbollah is one. The production of Islamist ideas, in turn, led to the emergence of new forms of economic activity, wage labour and professions tied directly to the institutions, seminaries, schools, organisations and overall mobilization activities of Hezbollah.”
(Abisaab 2006:231)

The main historical places of public religious activity in the early years of Hezbollah were the mosques of Bir Al-Abed (*al-Imâm al-Rida*), Ghobeyri (*al-Imâm al-Mahdî*) and Airport Road (*al-Rasul al-'Azam*), all located in the southern suburbs of Beirut, and the *hawza* of Baalbek founded in 1978 by Abbas Al-Mussawi (second Secretary General of the party, 1991-1992).¹⁴³ The sermons and religious formations provided in these institutions were highly politicised. Their diffusion was also helped by recorded audiotapes, which had proven an effective means of propaganda during the years of the Iranian revolution (Lamloum 2009a). Important Hezbollah “*Hawzât*” are

¹⁴³ Abbas Al-Mussawi was a Lebanese Shi'a cleric who was a member of al-Dawa before he joined Amal. He was then one of the founders of Hezbollah, and became Secretary General in May 1991. He was killed by the Israeli forces in 1992 (Blanford 2011:96-100).

found today in Siddikin in South Lebanon *Hawza al-Imâm al-Mahdi*, the *Hawza al-Imâm al-Muntazar* in Baalbek, *Hawza al-'almiyya al-dînniyya* in Tyr and *al-Rasul al-Akram*'s in the southern suburbs of Beirut. Other institutions linked to Hezbollah diffusing the religious and political message of the Islamic movement are the Centre for Youth Education in Jibsheit (South Lebanon), the Educational Hawza in Brital (Bekaa), the Iranian Religious Centre in Tyr and the Centre for Islamic Martial Arts in Kabrikha (South Lebanon) (Hamzeh 1993:327).

Hezbollah has also established very strong relations with three clerical associations, which are the "*Hay'at Ulamâ` Jabal 'Amil*" (the Committee of *Ulema* of Mount Amil), directed by Atif al Nabulsi,¹⁴⁴ (who is not a member of Hezbollah but is very close to it and supports its policies), the "*Tajamu' al-'Ulamâ` al-Muslimîn fi Lubnân*" (Association of Muslim *Ulema* in Lebanon), headed by Sheik Hassan Abdallah (*Tajamu' al-'Ulamâ` al-Muslimîn fi Lubnân* 2014), and the "*Tajamu' al-'Ulamâ` al-Muslimîn fil-Biqâ`*" (Association of Muslims *Ulema* in the Bekaa) (Charara 2007:4).

In the *hawzât*, *sheikhs* train other *sheikhs* whose role is to spread support for the Islamic way of life (see below) and the policies of Hezbollah. Women and men are trained separately, and go on to pass their religious knowledge to the immediate and extended family unit (Harb 2007:225). Through these institutions, Hezbollah promotes a certain popular conception of religion that links support for the party with the fulfilment of religious obligations. Hezbollah-affiliated *sheikhs* in *hawzât* and mosques can be viewed as organic intellectuals whose role, in a Gramscian sense, is to elaborate a particular project for the Shi'a population by organising it in both ideological and practical terms. The role of the *ulema*, or more generally religious clerics, as a vanguard is also symbolized by Khomeini's slogan: "the *Ulema* are the leaders" (cited in Charara 2007:65). An important aspect to this religious work is the institutionalisation of religious celebrations and ceremonies, which are used to bind Hezbollah's members and supporters around a common ideology and conception of collective action (Harb 2010:173-175). In this sense, the form of Hezbollah's religious activities is highly political; a link that is clearly demonstrated during election periods.

¹⁴⁴The *Sheikh* Atif Al-Nabulsi, was the one to issue a fatwa during the 2005 crisis in the Lebanese government following the suspension of participation of Shi'a Ministers to the Siniora Cabinet forbidding the approval of the nomination of new Shi'a ministers not issued from Amal and Hezbollah (cited in Daher 2014:282).

At these times, religious ceremonies are used to mobilise popular support for the party. At the same time, *Sheikhs* play a key role in relaying fatwas from Hezbollah or religious leaders close to the Islamic movement, for example in imposing a moral obligation to vote for the list supported by Hezbollah during the various elections summed up in the party slogan: “your vote is a duty (*amâna*) on which you will be judged at the end of your days” (Al-Hajj 2002:176).

One very important example of this use of religious celebration is that of Ashura,¹⁴⁵ which commemorates the martyrdom of the Imam Hussein in 680, during the Battle of Karbala. Hezbollah began to organise its own separate Ashura processions in 1985, in which the organisation regularly engaged in street confrontations with its rival Amal, reflecting competition over who would become hegemonic within the Shi’a population (Shaery-Eisenlohr 2005:140). In 1993, Hezbollah organised its first meeting of public lamentation for the death of Hussein (also called *majlis husaynî*) in Dahyeh and two years later a large tent was installed (Mervin 2008b:196). In 2002, Hezbollah built a building for this specific event in which Hassan Nasrallah made speeches. Since that time, Hezbollah has turned the Ashura celebrations into a symbol of its power of mobilisation, especially in Dahyeh. The processions indicate the high level of organisation and conformity within the party, in which “everyone wears the required costume, holds the place that was assigned in the rank and hit their chest in a similar pace” (Mervin 2008b:197). In this sense, the ritual practices of Ashura constitute an “invented tradition” (see Hosbawm and Ranger 1992): they build a Shi’a collective memory, whether on a local level or at the wider community level. These invented traditions act to reinforce processes of identity construction and a definition of politics.

All religious holidays give rise to activities and celebrations prepared by Hezbollah through the “*Jam’iyya al-Ta’lîm al-Dînî al-Islâmî*”, the Islamic Religious Education Association (IREA), an educational organisation linked to Hezbollah. IREA organises numerous activities: preparation of Islamic and cultural competitions during Ramadan, celebration of the “sacrifice” feast or “*’Aîd al-Adha*” in the al-Mustapha schools, celebration of the “*taklîf Char’î*” feast in which 9-year old girls in the al-

¹⁴⁵ This event takes place on a yearly basis from the first days of the “muhammad” month.

Mustapha schools put on the veil (see below), organisation of three iftars during Ramadan in Beirut, the South and the Bekaa and theatre plays and competitions for religious commemorations (Le Thomas 2012a:157-158).¹⁴⁶

All of these institutions and religious occasions are thus used by Hezbollah to develop a wider religiosity within the Shi'a population and a separate sense of identity set apart from the wider Lebanese society. In this manner, as Mona Harb (2010:173) has noted, Shi'a Islamic belief – reinforced and institutionalised by Hezbollah in religious holidays, ceremonies and processions – allow Hezbollah to accumulate 'symbolic capital', thus guaranteeing the reproduction and the legitimisation of the party itself. She adds that the investment of the movement in these types of activities, called demonstratives, "constitutes a form of legitimate self assertion by which power is known and recognized" in the words of Pierre Bourdieu (1980 cited Harb 2010:173).

5.5 Media and Production of Culture

Since its establishment, Hezbollah has placed a particular emphasis on developing its media network. Hezbollah started to develop formal media institutions as soon as 1982, by groups of people that would officially establish the party in 1985. First, they published a newsletter called al-Mujtahid (the Struggler), which had a peculiar Iranian inspired rhetoric and style. As described by the scholars Lina Khatib, Dina Matar and Atef Alshaer:

"the newsletter carried reports about Iran and local developments related to Iran, such as celebrations of the Iranian Islamic Revolution in Iran and in Lebanon, as well as the activities of the Islamic Committees and speeches by Iranian and Lebanese clerical leaders." (Khatib, Matar and Alshaer 2014:9)

¹⁴⁶ These commemorations include Ashura, 14 Rabab (celebration of the birth of Imam Ali), 15 *Cha'ban* (celebration of the birth of the Imam al- Mahdi), 18 *Thu al-Hijja* ('*Aid al-Ghadir*) (Le Thomas 2012a:158).

The publication of this newsletter was stopped following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982, and was replaced by a four page leaflet called *Ahl al-Thugur* (the People of the outpost), which maintained its focus on Iranian affairs and the battle between the Islamic Nation and the Israeli enemy (Khatib, Matar and Alshaer 2014:9).

According to Abbas Al-Mussawi, the second Secretary General of the party assassinated by Israeli forces in 1992, “When the stands of the mosques will associate themselves with the modern stands that are television and video, it is at this moment that we will be able to create the Ummah” (Lamloum 2008a:22). Naim Qassem has also noted that Hezbollah’s “visual media is an efficient arm because it transmits the event without any need of comments” (cited in Lamloum 2008a:26).

Hezbollah’s media network has three main components: First, the television channel al-Manar, established at the beginning of the nineties at the initiative of businessmen close to the party. The television channel is now under the total domination of the party (Qassir 2011). Second, websites, magazines and newspapers such as the weekly *al-Intiqad* (the critical) formerly known as *al-‘Ahed* (the Pledge), which is the party’s main mouthpiece and was established in June 1984, *Baqiyyat Allâh*, a monthly cultural magazine focusing particularly on issues relating to Islamic Shi’a Law, which is distributed to around 17,000 cadres and members of Hezbollah (Lamloum 2008a:33) and the magazine “*al-amâna*” of the association “*al-‘Amal al-Baladî*” (the municipal work), which concentrates on municipality issues. Lastly, the radio station al-Nour (Harb 2010:99) established in 1987, which is now one of the largest and most listened-to radio stations in Lebanon. It also broadcasts abroad (Qassir 2011). Each of these institutions play a key role in diffusing the vocabulary and the imagery of Hezbollah’s worldview through shows, documentaries and games addressing themes of resistance, Islam, Palestine and Zionism (Harb 2010:110). Hezbollah also has other resources to spread its messages such as musical groups (including al-Wilâya and Wa’d), publishing houses (Lebanese Cultural Centre, al-Hadi Publishing) and film and production houses (Ressalat and Dar al-Manar) (Lamloum 2009a).

Until the mid-2000s, all the communication activities of the party were supervised by the Central Information Unit (*Wahdat al-l'âm al-markazî*) (CIU), which was managed by a member of the Majlis al-Shura and directly submitted to the authority of the President of the Executive Council (Lamloum 2008a:24). The CIU combined the regional units (Bekaa, Beirut and the South), the unit of foreign relations managing relations with national and international media, the committee of information activities in charge of graphics, banners, chants and placards, in addition to the directors of the *al-'Ahd* newspaper, the directors of al-Manar television and al-Nour radio station (Lamloum 2008a:24). The CIU was also in charge of collaboration with municipalities governed by Hezbollah to rename squares and decorate them with specific pictures and banners. New names were attributed to some specific squares for example: Jerusalem avenue, Khomeini avenue, Hadi Nasrallah avenue and Resistance avenue (Harb 2010:163). As explained by the director of the CIU in an interview in 2004: "we want to create a specific urban décor, pedestrian streets, monuments on squares that reveal the identity of the neighbourhoods, which show that we are here now, in this location" (cited in Harb 2010:163).

In 2004, the party's 7th Congress decided to place even greater prioritisation on cultural issues and their link with popular mobilisation (Harb 2010:87). This led to the establishment of the Artistic and Media Unit, attached to the EC, which was placed in charge of graphic means of communication (posters, paintings and slogans) that would be spread throughout Shi'a areas (Daher 2014:200). In this manner Hezbollah aimed at reproducing a specific identity in the territories it controlled, where party references would be materialised in space through banners and pictures installed in the streets, objects positioned on public squares and regular commemorations (Harb 2010:163). This panoply of images is a striking confirmation of Gramsci's observation that a movement seeking hegemony must never tire with repeating its ideas: "repetition is the best dialectic means for working on the popular mentality" (cited in Thomas 2009:340).

In this framework, al-Manar television held a particularly important place due to its large audience as the second most watched TV channel in the Arab world (after al-Jazeera with an estimated 10 million viewers in 2001) throughout the 2000s (Harb

2010:153). Al-Manar has nevertheless probably lost some sections of its audience following its military involvement in the Syrian revolutionary process alongside the Assad regime, which has proven hugely unpopular to the Islamic movement among the people of the region. According to a survey conducted in March 2013 by Pew Research Center, Hezbollah was widely unpopular in the region (Drake 2013). Hezbollah was actually viewed unfavourably in Egypt by 75 percent, in Turkey by 73 percent, in Jordan by 72 percent and in Lebanon by 59 percent. Views are mixed in the Occupied Palestinian Territories where 49 percent have an unfavourable view of Hezbollah while 43 percent have a positive one. Views of Hezbollah in the Palestinian territories have nevertheless turned significantly more negative since 2011 when 61 percent saw the militant group positively and 37 percent had an unfavourable view. In Tunisia, 38 percent have an unfavourable view of Hezbollah and 35 percent have a positive one, with 27 percent expressing no opinion. Within Lebanon about nine-in-ten Shi'a (89 percent) view Hezbollah favourably while 94 percent of Sunni and 60 percent of Christian regard Hezbollah unfavourably (Drake 2013).

According to station officials in the mid 2000s, al-Manar's annual budget stood at approximately \$15 million (Krayem cited in Jorish 2004). It employs around 350 people, including twenty foreign correspondents (Lamloun 2009b). Its organisation consists of six departments,¹⁴⁷ including a department in charge of its Internet website which alone has ten employees. As Olfa Lamloun (2009b) has argued, the first mission of al-Manar was to build a space of legitimacy for the armed resistance against the Israeli occupation, whose ultimate reference point is Islamic and Shi'a symbolism. The channel has also filled two other major functions:

“It is first to weld and reproduce the Shi'a popular basis of Hezbollah structured in a political community through the "mise en scene" or demonstration of the power of the party, especially in times of crisis and of intense inter-communitarian conflicts. Al-Manar therefore operates as a mediator of the identity of Hezbollah and of all its attributes of legitimation to its Shi'a

¹⁴⁷ Social and entertainment programs, sports programs, programs for children and youth, cultural and religious programs, Lebanese and foreign programs and lastly head of directors.

popular base. It participates in the reproduction of its system of representation, which draws its references in the collective memory of the Shi'a martyrology. It boasts its cadres of frames of perception and allows the public to locate, perceive, identify, classify the events of (his or her) environment, their experiences and the world. It systematically transmits the different religious and political ceremonies and ritual celebrations organized by the party (the day of the martyr, the day of liberation, Ashura, the day of Jerusalem...), which characterises the time of the community and maintain a space of familiarity between its members. Social programs publicise the merits of Hezbollah's social actions and valorise them as a source of legitimation. Sports and children programs and soap operas offer a fun but virtuous entertainment." (Lamloum 2009b)

One example of al-Manar's broadcasting was the series "*al-Ghâlibun*", which traces the history of Hezbollah from 1985 to 1992. *Al-Ghâlibun* was broadcast by al-Manar in the summer 2012, during Ramadan, and cost \$2 million to produce (Calabrese 2013). The series was explicitly crafted to portray Hezbollah as the principal resistance movement against Israel through the 1980s and early 1990s. It relates a fictional account of its main protagonist, Nasser, who begins as a secular fighter but finally decides to join Hezbollah because "it is stronger and more effective [than other parties] because of the faith of its members" (Calabrese 2013). In shows such as this, al-Manar's programming projects a historical narrative that upholds the party's claims to be the sole and most effective representative of the Shi'a population, while simultaneously tying this to its religious principles.¹⁴⁸

Dina Matar and Farah Dakhilallah argue in a similar vein that:

"Al-Manar has continued to promote Hezbollah's culture of

¹⁴⁸ The series was severely criticised by other forces in Lebanon – including the LCP, the SSNP and Amal Movement – because of its distorted view of Hezbollah's role. Feminists also attacked the show because of its downplaying of the role of non-military resistance, particularly the direct and indirect support furnished to fighters by women over past decades (Deeb and Harb 2010:26).

resistance, considered an integral aspect of the party's Iranian-inspired Islamic milieu in Lebanon, and, which along with its constituent resistance identity and culture, are essential products of Hezbollah's institutions which operate today as a holistic and integrated network which produce sets of values and meanings embedded in an interrelated religious and political framework – that of Wilâyat al-Faqîh ... The rhetoric of resistance is reflected in al-Manar's references to the grand narratives of Shi'a history such as the Battle of Kerbala, narratives that serve to interpellate all the country's Shi'a population, as well as other Muslim Shi'a beyond Lebanon's boundaries, while indirectly excluding members of other religious communities. This rhetoric also serves to link Lebanon's Shi'a to a greater Shi'a community that extends beyond the borders and history of the Lebanese state." (Matar and Dakhlallah 2006:31)

They add that al-Manar particularly emphasizes its role as the communal voice of Shi'a in Lebanon during its coverage and religious programming of the Shi'a holy months (Matar and Dakhlallah 2006:31).

The specific religious principles of the party are also imposed on the employees of the channel in regards to their personal appearance on air. The management places restrictions on what headscarves can be worn by female presenters, insisting that the head covering had to be a dark uniform colour (Zaraket 2012). The employees are also ordered by al-Manar management to avoid the appearance of unveiled women on the station's programs, restricting their appearance to news bulletins and reports, where for example, people on the street are asked for their opinion (Zaraket 2012). As Huda Rizk has noted, "from a media perspective, i.e. externally, the party is open to unveiled women and accepts them because it needs them to show an image of openness in the Arab and Western worlds and it needs their political support" (cited in Merhi Z. 2012). Nonetheless, "the party wants to make sure that people who are socially different from it are not hostile to it. But if you are an unveiled Shi'a woman,

then it's a different story. Such a woman can not be brought into prominence in the party because she can not be a role model" (cited in Merhi Z. 2012). Al-Manar therefore adheres fully to the role assigned to television by Imam Khomeini: of a public university whose pedagogic role is to guide the population towards a pure society, uncorrupted by the West (Chelkowski and Dabashi 2000:262-264). The IRI, since the victory of its own revolution, actually emphasized the role of media in the dissemination of the Islamic culture. This is demonstrated by the law of 1982, which approved the constitution of Iranian radio and television, stating that "mass media, radio, television, must be at the service of ... the dissemination of Islamic culture" (Rajaei 1993:121).

In addition to its media network, Hezbollah has developed a specific attitude towards the production and control of art. In 2004, the party centralised its direct involvement in these processes through an affiliated professional organisation called the Lebanese Association for the Arts (LAA) or '*al-Jam'iyya al-Lubnâniyya lil-Funun*' (Deeb and Harb 2011:17). The newly established LAA was in charge of designing and implementing cultural projects commemorating the resistance and other themes, centralising previously dispersed efforts in this sphere (Deeb and Harb 2013:67-70). The LAA produced exhibitions, videos, billboards and other media narrating the key ideals of the "resistance society", celebrating political and religious events and commemorating the party's successes and achievements. In 2006, following the war, the LAA was the institution in charge of the campaign in three different languages (French, English and Arabic) praising the divine victory of Hezbollah (Fawaz and Harb 2010:25). It was the LAA as well that launched the campaign "Values" with slogans such as "order is from the faith" and "my family is my happiness", which wanted to raise awareness about "order" and "family values" as Hezbollah considered there was a general decline in values that led to growing "social problems" (divorce, selfishness and drug addiction). The campaign included, as described by Deeb and Harb (2013:69), both visual and substantive educational elements, such as billboards, television and radio shows hosting sociologists, lectures and workshops at schools and Friday sermons.

The LAA showed the increasing importance given by Hezbollah to the notion of

“culture”, understood as a holistic concept, as it gathered professionally trained artists, graphic designers, and architects.¹⁴⁹

In 2010, the LAA was separated into two associations that are in charge of different domains of cultural production. *Ressalat* (messages) became the organisation responsible for media campaigns. The Association for the Celebration of the Tradition of Resistance, ‘*Jam’iyya Ihyyâ’ Turâth al-Muqâwama*’, manages the construction of large-scale structures including the Khiam and Mleeta sites, the memorial garden in Marun Al-Ra’s in southern Lebanon the memorial museum for martyred Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyid Abbas Al-Mussawi in the Bekaa Valley, as well as the Resistance Museum in the southern suburbs of Beirut (Deeb and Harb 2013:239). The conscious attempt to build popular hegemony through the use of these sites has been noted by one of their designers: “You can control people by narrating a specific heritage and memory. This is what the Israelis do. We are fighting their culture by providing a counter-culture. We want to fix our memory through architectural and design language. Few people read books but many people come to visit a building, a museum or a heritage site” (cited in Deeb and Harb 2009:203-204).

Within this cultural emphasis, the control of the memory of Hezbollah soldiers dead on the military field against the Israeli army is highly significant. Hezbollah institutions involved in this include the ‘Tribute to Martyrs’, a foundation that honours the martyr’s family and assists them by, for example, taking care of the maintenance of the tomb (Daher 2014:149). Another centre, ‘Memories of the Martyrs’, was established in 2004 with the objective of enhancing and preserving the legacy of the Islamic resistance and particularly of martyrs. They collect the personal belongings of martyrs ranging from items such as wills, letters, poems, books, testimonies and memories their families are willing to share (Markaz Athâr al-Shuhadâ` 2014). The central aim is to produce posthumous biographies of martyrs and has the objective of publishing an encyclopaedia of the martyrs of the resistance (Daher 2014:149). The centre also organises on a yearly basis, particularly during Ashura, exhibitions in

¹⁴⁹ Lara Deeb and Mona Harb explain Hezbollah’s understanding of culture the following way: “Culture here is a holistic that includes ideas about politics, morality, nature, heritage, space, architecture, design, civic order, education, and taste” (Deeb and Harb 2013:67-70).

memory of the martyrs, while also assisting in the maintenance and beautification of tombs and mausoleums, the establishment of memorial tablets at the location of their death, and the lobbying of municipalities to change the name of streets and squares after the names of martyrs (Daher 2014:149).

In all of these activities, it is evident that Hezbollah expends a conscious and considerable effort in shaping how the wider Shi'a population perceives the historical narrative of resistance and the party's role in it. This narrative is heavily linked to – and reinforced by – the religious symbolism associated with the Shi'a faith. It is revealing, for example, how the contemporary themes of resistance, persecution and martyrdom are continually situated in reference to pivotal moments in Shi'a history (notably Ashura). The construction of this narrative through Hezbollah's intervention in the media and cultural field thus helps to legitimise Hezbollah as the authentic expression of Shi'a identity today. It also acts to strengthen the norms associated with Hezbollah's religious message, an important aspect to the consensual and coercive features of Hezbollah's hegemony explored further below.

5.6 Education and Youth

A fourth major priority of Hezbollah's intervention in civil society is the education and youth sector. The Educational Institute (*al-Mu'assasa al-Tarbawiyya*, founded in 1991) of Hezbollah is the institution that supervises the educational sector and is aimed at recomposing Shi'a society (*i'âda siyyâgha tarkiba al-mujtama'*) by producing "a new 'mentality' for a society participating actively in its own reconstruction, in resistance and in economic rebirth (Harb and Leenders 2005:187). An important feature of this 'rebirth' is the inculcation of the values of *iltizâm* (religious commitment) – a notion that is discussed in detail below (Interview of the Vice President of the Islamic Institute, 1998 cited in Harb and Leenders 2005:187).

To this end, the party has established and directly operates a network of private schools including al-Mahdi (13,500 students), al-Mustapha (8,300 students) and Imdad (3,500 students). The al-Mahdi schools have expanded rapidly to 14 schools in Lebanon (seven in the South, four in the Bekaa and three in Dahyeh) as well as

one institution in the city of Qom in Iran (Le Thomas 2012a:92). The total number of students in Hezbollah's network of schools reached nearly 30,000 in the mid 2000s (Le Thomas 2012a:85). According to one researcher, between 70 percent and 80 percent of students in al-Mahdi schools had a family member affiliated to Hezbollah (Osseyran 1997:142). Hezbollah also runs technical institutes established by independent foundations linked to the party, such as the al-Shahid technical institution linked to the al-Shahid hospital. In the mid 2000s, around 23,000 children were beneficiaries of the financial support system for education established by the Islamist movement, according to Lebanese researcher Nizar Hamzeh (2004:57).

There are two main institutional links between the party and this network of schools. First, the organisation has a Student Mobilisation Unit, which is in charge of student related issues. Catherine Le Thomas notes that the Unit "is the interface between the party and its institutional environment (including its private schools and the public schools under its domination)" and through this Unit the party "seeks to promote Hezbollah's interests in the sector, by pursuing as far as it can a cultural, social and political action on the public and private education establishments located in the Shi'a majority populated regions" (Le Thomas 2012a:97). To this end, the Student Unit organises students affiliated to the movement through student committees. The movement also provides scholarships for students to complete their university studies.

The second key institutional link to the education sector is the IREA mentioned above. IREA provides Islamic religious teaching, which is the main objective of the association and is widely known to be linked to Hezbollah. Naim Qassem was a founding member and the organisation's President from 1974, the year of its establishment, to 1988 (Le Thomas 2012a:85, *Jam'iyya al-Ta'lim al-Dînî al-Islâmî* 2012).

The association employs 1,300 employees and manages the al-Mustapha schools. Through the 2000s, about 60 percent of the public schools in Shi'a dominated regions were using IREA services, particularly in Beirut and the Bekaa (Le Thomas 2012a:85). The association provided its services to about 135,000 students in 507

schools, both private and public, in 2002-2003 (Le Thomas 2012a:85). It was around 141,260 students in 2012 (Jam'iyya al-Ta'lim al-Dînî al-Islâmî 2012). Hezbollah's influence is therefore not limited to its own schools but to other public schools as well.

The iconography deployed in the schools reinforces the religious and political content of visible images in the streets of Dahyeh, with a prevalence of Shi'a religious images and portraits of Khomeini and Khomeini (Le Thomas 2008:156). Hezbollah's Information Unit, which is in charge of displaying this iconography, aims to propagate a message conveying the religiosity of the school environment that is seamlessly connected to the surrounding streets (Harb and Leenders 2005:190). Teachers are selected on the basis of their religious commitment, and are expected to take mandatory religious lessons of 30 hours per year, with an exam at the end of the year (Le Thomas 2008:155). Catherine Le Thomas argues that: "schools are an essential tool in the societal perspective of Hezbollah, because they represent a matrix to consolidate and expand the popular basis of the party and to form a new generation of youth – all-rounded Shi'a – holders of its project of society (Le Thomas 2008:149)".

In addition to formal schooling, Hezbollah also seeks to mobilise youth through extra-curricular activities. One of the most important institutional examples of this is the al-Mahdi scouts, which help to socialise youth aged from 6 to 18 years old into Hezbollah's belief system. In 2015 more than 76,000 youth were members of the organisation, which also had close to 4,000 scout leaders, according the General Commissioner of the association Nazih Fayyad who is at the head of the Mahdi scouts since its establishment in 1998 (Ayub 2015). The al-Mahdi scouts are not limited to Hezbollah's network of schools, but include Islamic establishments and villages in Shi'a dominated regions. Numerically, they are the most important scout group in Lebanon (Le Thomas 2012b:288). The al-Mahdi scouts organise a number of activities, but with a specific emphasis on religion, notably by teaching to follow the Wilâyat al-Faqîh (Le Thomas 2012b:299) and the culture of religious commitment (Harb 2010:111). The General Commissioner of the association Nazih Fayyad explains that the scouts are educated in the Islamic method and the objective of the

association is to firstly teach individuals to be self reliant, secondly to serve the people and the society, thirdly to defend the motherland, and finally to promote education and *ijtihād* (Ayub 2015). Scout activities are spread throughout the year and link up with activities of other Hezbollah's organisations. Sporting events are an important focus of scout involvement, and Hezbollah owns seven sport fields in Dahyeh as well as a sports club of around 120 teams (Harb 2010:110). The sports teams compete against each other in tournaments during religious and political celebrations organised by the party. The driving principle of these activities is clearly expressed by the head of the youth and sport division in Hezbollah:

“The young children play in the streets, lose their time with electronic games. From 1982, the party wanted to diffuse a sport culture and a work among the youth to mobilise them. Sport gathers and unifies... The sport work unifies the opinions and allows the control of moral corruption. This latter has increased, we must teach people religion, and try to reform the individual religiously. Sport educates the mind.” (cited in Harb 2010:110)

5.7 *Hâla islâmiyya*: Consent and Coercion

This survey of Hezbollah's network of social, cultural, religious and educational institutions confirms the importance attached by the organisation to building a base of support in Shi'a areas of Lebanon and the ways in which hegemony has been constructed through the party's intervention in the various spheres of civil society. A common theme that runs through all of these spheres is a pronounced emphasis on a particular religious conception of the world. As noted earlier, this conception is consciously articulated from the top of the organisation's hierarchy (the Shura Council) and runs through all subsequent institutional tiers. Members of Hezbollah are expected to follow a strict religious education, including acceptance of the Wilâyat al-Faqîh doctrine (Fadlallah 2012b). The party's work in the areas of culture, media, schooling and youth has a strong emphasis on religious symbolism and is generally directed by religious figures (Daher 2014:200). Even its social support

services are conceived of in religious terms.¹⁵⁰

The ideological framework guiding this religious framework is, however, distinct and relatively unique.¹⁵¹ It is encapsulated in two important notions: the *hâla islâmiyya* (the Islamic milieu) and *iltizâm* (commitment), which have as their aims an increase in the level and the atmosphere of religiosity among both society and individuals.

The *hâla islâmiyya* expresses a totalising, collective identity that embodies a vision of “Islam as an ideology (*‘aqîda*) and system (*nizâm*), as an idea (*fikr*) and government (*hikm*)” (Qassem 2008:34-35). The adhesion to the *hâla islâmiyya* produces a collective identity generating a strong sense of belonging, which gives meaning to the individual. Lara Deeb (2006:36), for example, explains that for the *hâla islâmiyya* to be fully accomplished, each person is responsible for carrying out informed choices based on religious knowledge. The *hâla islâmiyya* is therefore conceived as a collective product, with solidarity and a sense of voluntarism as essential keys to its development. Harb and Leenders emphasize that “Hezbollah’s institutions make sure to promote the significance of solidarity and community work through a variety of religious narratives and symbolic references” (Harb and Leenders 2005:192).

Within this collective identity, *iltizâm* refers to individual norms and practices (Harb 2010:190). Lara Deeb (2006:102-103) describes *iltizâm* as obligations, for example the *hijab* (headscarf) is part of the *iltizâm* for women, drinking alcohol is forbidden for committed (*multazimîn*). *iltizâm* ranges from the contractual to those that are linked to a personal sense of duty. There are many ways to express *iltizâm*, as Deeb explains “a socially inclined person might distribute food to the poor, a politically inclined person might collect donations for Hezbollah resistance fighters, and a religiously inclined person might pray and fast regularly” (Deeb 2006:36).

A key characteristic of these notions is the role of Hezbollah authority figures in circumscribing the norms of social behaviour. As one observer has noted in regards

¹⁵⁰ Muhammad Al-Khansa, Hezbollah Mayor of Dahyeh declared on several occasions that “the greatest Jihad is to reach to the people in the framework of social work” (Al-Khansa 2012; Harb 2002:152).

¹⁵¹ Hamas has also worked to enforce an “Islamic milieu” in the Palestinian Occupied Territories, particularly in the Gaza Strip. Although there are many similarities with Hezbollah in this regard, Hamas’ ideology has placed greater emphasis on Palestinian national identity, and the role of the national struggle.

to the Hezbollah schools in Dahyeh, “The Islamic school cultivates particular ways of life consistent with the Islamic ideal, which is defined by the religious figures and persons of authorities in the community or the network it belongs. It (the Islamic school) seeks to draw for its users the right paths, moral, social, religious, political and offer figures that embodies the highest level of the ideals and thoughts that it promotes” (Le Thomas 2012a:151).

A notable and important feature of this religious perspective is the way in which social passivity and difference are stigmatised. All social practices that do not fit within the framework defined by Hezbollah are thereby branded as being unlawful (*harâm*), corrupted (*mafsudîn*) or shameful (*‘ayb*) (Harb 2010:185). In this manner, Hezbollah propagates a worldview that encourages support and engagement with the party’s activities (as a necessary requirement of religious piety), while simultaneously ostracising those who deviate from these norms. Social behaviour thus adapts itself to the worldview of Hezbollah, and leads to high levels of conformity within Shi’a populations.

Hezbollah’s vision of these religious codes and norms also sets itself up as “authentic” Islam, which Lara Deeb (2003:2) defines as an Islam that has a modern interpretation based on knowledge and understanding, in contrast to a traditional, unquestioned Islam that is followed blindly by the older generations. This is a further reflection of the transformation within the Shi’a population itself, between old and new elites (Deeb 2003:2-3).

A distinctive feature of this ‘authentic Islam’ is a specific Shi’a identity that is demarcated from Sunni and Christian populations. One illustration of this is shown in the content of school textbooks used in Hezbollah schools. In the history textbook ‘*Nahnu wa Târikh*’ (Us and History), for example, the history of Islam is taught in a manner that is highly sectarian and Shi’a oriented (Le Thomas 2012a:229). The Umayyad government is described as corrupt and unjust, while the penetration of Shiism in Lebanon in the region of the *Jabal ‘Amil* is characterised as the real or authentic territory of belief. This particular status of *Jabal ‘Amil* is specific to Hezbollah’s schoolbooks and is not present in other history books of Lebanon (Le

Thomas 2012a:229). The Abbasid Caliphates are also portrayed very negatively in showing their cruelty and injustice and presenting them as the assassins of the descendants of Imam Hussein, and Jaafar Sadiq (the sixth Imam of Duodeciman Shiism). The decline of the Abbasid Caliphates are explained as the logical consequence of their injustice and their taste for pleasure. Catherine Le Thomas argues that “although the story always condemn personalities and dynasties, and not a religion or a particular sect, this nevertheless contributes to underline the boundaries and limits between Shi’a and Sunni and to trace the founding moments establishing this boundary” (Le Thomas 2012a:229).¹⁵²

This particular variant of Shi’a Islam – articulated through the notions of *hâla islâmiyya* and *iltizâm* – is consistently promoted by Hezbollah through the institutional networks described in this chapter. Ideologically, it is a key element to Hezbollah’s construction of consent and coercion within Lebanese Shi’a areas. The consensual aspects of this have been discussed in the preceding chapter and include the various social services provided by Hezbollah and the socialisation of youth into the *hâla islâmiyya* through the organisation’s network of kindergartens, schools, scouts, leisure parks, summer camps, organised trips, television programs and so forth. All these institutions and experiences contribute from a young age to the learning and acquiring of religious, social and political values linked to the *hâla islâmiyya*. Media and cultural networks of the party further strengthen the acquisition and internalisation of these values (Harb 2010:182).

It is critical, however, not to ignore the coercive aspects of this particular ideological framework. Precisely due to the high levels of social conformity and the strict policing of any deviation from the dominant norms, any behaviour that steps outside these norms is likely to be very costly to the individual on both a social and material level. This prospective threat is utilised as a form of coercion.

¹⁵² Despite this fact, at a political level Hezbollah continues to maintain and nurture relations with parties who have different religious bases and identities, for example Hamas, a Palestinian Sunni political movement and an offshoot of the MB, or the FPM, headed by General Michel Aoun, based in the Christian population, and Hezbollah’s closest ally in Lebanon. In the past few years, and especially following the document of understanding, a political agreement between Hezbollah and FPM signed in February 2006, Hezbollah has made numerous openings to Christians in Lebanon. I witnessed Hezbollah members installing banners celebrating Easter celebrations for Christians in Dahyeh, sending numerous delegations to meet the various Christian religious authorities, and broadcasts on al-Manar of Christian religious celebrations and church services, including Christmas 2013 where it extensively reported from various churches in Lebanon.

One example of this is Hezbollah's network of neighbourhood committees for "enjoining virtue and forbidding vice", which are active in party-dominated areas, particularly Dahyeh. The activities of these committees include decorating city blocks during Ramadan and informing the party about "improper" activities occurring in their neighbourhoods (Deeb and Harb 2010:16). The party is able to exercise social and economic pressure in order to forbid activities that fall outside its understanding of appropriate moral behaviour. If a business does not reform (which, for example, can include abstaining from serving alcohol or exerting greater control over mixed-sex interaction in the establishment), Hezbollah will initiate a boycott and put the café or restaurant out of business by ruining its reputation (Deeb and Harb 2010:16-17). In one example, in the town of Hula in 2012, members of Hezbollah attempted to close a shop providing alcohol and wounded two members of the LCP who came to the help of the owner of the shop (Orient Le Jour 2011c; Noujaim 2012). In October 2009, a Brazilian samba show was banned and torpedoed in the southern city of Tyr after about 100 Shi'a clerics under the chairmanship of *Sheikh* Ali Yassine, a powerful Hezbollah follower, met and issued a fatwa forbidding it and declaring it sinful (Bejjani 2009). Hezbollah militants have also disrupted events such as ceremonies called *zajal* (improvised poetry competition) in some areas of the South (ICG 2007:20). In the August 2002 edition of Hezbollah's magazine *Baqiyyat Allâh*, Khomeini's fatwa on music was published, which characterised any music that takes a human being into a state of euphoria is *haram*, and that one should only listen to cassette tapes registered and approved by the Islamic Council. According to Deeb and Harb (2013:137), Hezbollah follows this understanding by deeming as *haram* any music conducive to dancing or that excites the sexual instincts.

Mona Harb recounts another case of an ex-Hezbollah member who became a communist and was subsequently stigmatised by his neighbours in the Hay Al-Sellom neighbourhood. His ostracism was articulated through the notions of *hâla islâmiyya/iltizâm* and their emphasis on conformity; being a communist was characterised as heresy, and led to his social exclusion and eventual departure from the neighbourhood (Harb 2010:183). Even members close to the leadership can feel these disciplining elements – in 2003, the director of al-Manar was fired for having

published unconventional views on Ashura and for implicitly questioning the doctrine of the *Wilâyat al-Faqîh* (ICG 2003:14).

Hezbollah also uses forms of coercion and consent when individuals attempt to utilise certain ideological concepts outside of the party's tutelage. One example of this is the case of a Shi'a entrepreneur who launched a children's magazine independently from Hezbollah, in which he featured prominently the concepts of resistance and *Wilâyat al-Faqîh* (Harb and Leenders 2005:197). The individual was quickly approached by Hezbollah members, who informed him that he would either need to partner with Hezbollah and place the magazine under the supervision of the party, or cease publication (he chose the latter course) (Harb and Leenders 2005:197).

Hezbollah has also used its financial influence to pressure institutions to conform to the principles of the *hâla islâmiyya*. The Shqif Club for example, which had previously played a prominent social and cultural role all over the South and served alcoholic drinks and hosted dancing parties, was forced to ban alcoholic drinks and dancing after the club experienced a financial deficit and Hezbollah took over its cafeteria through one of the party's financiers (El-Cheikh and Saghyieh 2013b). The same thing occurred with the Qasr al-Muluk, which was "rescued" by Hezbollah money and ceased serving alcohol (El-Cheikh and Saghyieh 2013b).

On a political level, any dissenting Shi'a voice or critic of Hezbollah faces the threat of violent intimidations from the party, its supporters and even its allies. *Sheikh* Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, for example, was the target of violent condemnations from the followers of the *Wilâyat al-Faqîh* and Hezbollah after he proclaimed himself a "*marj'iyya*" (religious reference) in 1994, following the death of the Imam Al-Khui' in Iraq of whom he was the representative in Lebanon. Flyers and graffiti condemning him were placed the following evening on the walls surrounding his house and his mosque in Haret Hreik. For some Hezbollah members and followers of the *Wilâyat al-Faqîh* the self-proclamation by Fadlallah as a "*marj'iyya*" was considered as challenging Khomeini and the IRI. Fadlallah argued for the plurality of the "*marj'iyya*", but also of the *Wilâyat al-Faqîh* (Mervin 2008c:283). Hezbollah nevertheless

intervened quickly to cease any further violent outbreak, fearing dissension among the Shi'a population as Fadlallah was a very popular cleric and a religious reference (*marj'iyya*) for many (Harb 2010:239).¹⁵³

The aftermath of the 2006 war strengthened Hezbollah's refusal to tolerate criticism from other organisations and actors in the public sphere. Members and supporters of Hezbollah engaged increasingly in a *takhwin* discourse (accusations of treachery) against Shi'a who criticized or expressed reservations about the practices of Hezbollah. Such individuals were denied certain social and economic services, with the community as a whole subject "to greater pressure to conform to the expectations of Islamist clerics about religious observance, dress code, and social conduct (Abi Saab M. and Abi Saab R. 2014:143).

There are several recent illustrations of the increased use of coercive measures against those critical of Hezbollah. For example, the members and supporters of the Lebanese Option Party (formerly called the Lebanese Option Gathering) (LOP), have been the target of numerous attacks. Established in 2007 and headed by Ahmad Al-As'ad, the son of the well known As'ad feudal family in the South, the LOP is an independent Shi'a political party opposed to March 8, and more particularly to Hezbollah¹⁵⁴ and Amal. The car of Ahmad Al-As'ad was burned in 2009 (Khatib, Matar and Alshaer 2014:32). Moreover, Hezbollah members attacked protesters from the LOP and killed the head of the party's student wing Hachem Salman (19 years old), after shooting him in the abdomen during a protest against Hezbollah's involvement in Syria (Naharnet 2013; Orient Le Jour 2013d).

¹⁵³Differences continued to arise between the cleric and Hezbollah and *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*'s followers on political and doctrinal subjects throughout the nineties and the beginning of the 2000s. In 2003, he launched a strong verbal attack against the IRI, blaming it for arrogantly seeking to monopolise Shi'a religious teaching in Qom (ICG 2003:13-14). He was not welcome anymore in Hezbollah or Iranian circles. The rivalry was financial as well as social. Fadlallah, as a "*marj'iyya*", received voluntary donations ("*Khoms*") from his followers and channelled these resources into the social activities of his association "*al-Mabarrât*". These helped bolster his popular support by running various schools and educational institutions, a radio station (*al-Basha'ir*), mosques, cultural centres, cooperatives, hospitals and subsidy programs for students and orphans. By 2002, Fadlallah activities were said to be worth \$12.6 million (ICG 2003:13-14). The 2006 Lebanese war witnessed a rapprochement between *Sheikh* Fadlallah and Hezbollah because of the necessity of unifying against foreign aggression (Mervin 2008:283). In 2014, "*al-Mabarrât*" included 20 schools with 22,000 students (The Daily Star 2014b).

¹⁵⁴ As'ad accused Hezbollah of feeling "that its military, ideological and political links with Iran are more important than its commitment to Lebanon" (Bathish 2007).

In interviews conducted by International Crisis Group on the situation for political opponents of Hezbollah in Dahyeh, several individuals complained of political intimidation against them and spoke of an atmosphere hostile to all critics of the party. One journalist said that “when you live in Dahyeh and are opposed to Hezbollah, you must accept to lead a difficult life. You will probably feel isolated. If you oppose, or simply don’t follow Hezbollah, you can’t run a business. Party members, partisans, supporters will just boycott your shop” (cited in ICG 2014:20). In another case, a young woman who criticised Hezbollah’s support of the Syrian regime was threatened and insulted on Facebook and banned from returning to her village (ICG 2014:20). In May 2014, the journalist Hanin Ghaddar faced a violent campaign from Hezbollah media and its allies after criticising Hezbollah’s intervention in Syria to assist the Assad regime (Ghaddar 2014). In July 2014, in the city of Saida, a member of the Lebanese Resistance Brigades, which are affiliated to Hezbollah, attacked and threatened to kill the journalist Abdel Basset Tarjman, who directs a website critical of Hezbollah (Orient Le Jour 2014c).

5.8 Gendering Hegemony: The Role of Women in Hezbollah’s Worldview

The intertwined features of coercion and consent expressed through the Islamization of Shi’a populations also have a specific gendered component. In many ways, Hezbollah’s promotion of a particular role for women in society is a central aspect to the way that its hegemony is projected. It should be noted that membership of the party is officially a male privilege – no women members are permitted (Daher 2014:206). Instead, following the position of Khomeini, women are seen as the main transmission mechanism for the collective inculcation of religious norms embodied in the *hâla islâmiyya* and *iltizâm*. As mothers, according to Khomeini, women hold a “sensitive role ... in the upbringing of their children and consequently in the rectification or degeneration of society” (Khomeini 2001:38+81).¹⁵⁵ Similarly, Hezbollah *Sheikh* Naim Qassem (2008:291-293) has characterised the primary role of women as mother, sister, wife and daughter.

This perspective can be seen in Hezbollah’s school textbook, “*Al-Islâm Risâlatunâ*”,

¹⁵⁵ See “Imam’s speech on the sensitive role played by mothers in the upbringing of their children and consequently in the rectification or degeneration of society”(Khomeini 2001:81).

published by the IREA, which has a chapter entitled “the position of woman in Islam”. This book is taught to children prior to high school level, and outlines the role of women according to Hezbollah’s interpretation of Islam. While upholding the right of women to work and to be educated, it emphasizes what it describes as “female work”: teaching, sewing, nursing and so forth. Most significantly, the manual notes that: “Islam states that the work of a woman should not be done at the expense of the family, because to educate the future generations is the most important for Islam” (Le Thomas 2012a:206).

In line with this emphasis on the transmission of values to future generations, women form a major strategic interface between the party and its surrounding social environment. They are typically organised in specific womens' councils, distributed through mosques and neighbourhoods, which help mobilise for social and cultural events called for by the party (Qassem 2008:86). Some women of Hezbollah have run for office in Lebanese city councils, but none in parliamentary elections. In comparison, there are 9 female deputies in the IRI out of 290, while in Iraq we can find 83 female deputies out of 328 (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2014).

In most cases, Hezbollah's institutions are led by a small number of male cadres, alongside a large number of women volunteers who interact with its wider constituency. The party’s Social Affairs wing, for example, is organized through the structure of *‘al-akhawât al-mutatawwi’ât’* – sisters’ volunteers – who target beneficiaries of Hezbollah’s social work.¹⁵⁶ The network of social workers is composed of five to six men working full time, and more than one hundred female volunteers. Men hold fixed employment and work schedules, and their role is to process loans and allowances for beneficiaries. Women volunteers, on the other hand, have no fixed timetable, contract or office space. The recruitment of these volunteers is based on two criteria: to live in the neighbourhood where she works and to believe in Hezbollah’s ideology, including Islamic values and support for the resistance (Fawaz 2004:358-359).

¹⁵⁶ These social services are provided by the al-Imdad, al-Shahid and al-Jarha Institutions. These three institutions provide welfare services for impoverished families, as well as help the families of martyrs and injured.

As volunteers, they make a weekly visit to families in the neighbourhood they live in to check on benefits and other needs (Fawaz 2004:358-359). One of their key tasks during these visits is to strengthen their links with families and to monitor the households' commitment to Hezbollah's political perspective as well as conformity to the *hâla islâmiyya* and *iltizâm* (Harb 2010:176). If the volunteers detect any behaviour deemed to lie outside the norms established by the party, it could lead to the termination of social support (Le Thomas 2012a:142). In this manner, female volunteers play a central role in transmitting the particular values associated with the party to its wider social milieu, while also mediating the coercive aspects of Hezbollah's hegemony.

In consolidating this particular position of women in the organisation, Hezbollah places considerable emphasis on building adherence to fixed gender roles. Once again, this is closely related to religious symbolism and reference to historical moments within the Shi'a faith. In the Ashura commemorations, for example, clerics stress the differently gendered roles of *Ahl-al-Bayt* (the Prophet's family) – men are said to have participated in fighting while women looked after the children and provided moral support (Boumet Beirut 2013). Males are presented as chivalrous and strong; women are modest, patient and supportive. The cleric usually explains that these roles complement each other and that therefore, men and women must take on these roles in contemporary struggles. Men must be "*Hussayniyyûn*",¹⁵⁷ and women must be "*Zaynabiyyât*".¹⁵⁸ This is the way, according to Hezbollah's rhetoric, to strengthen the nation, achieve victory and guarantee their places in heaven (Boumet Beirut 2013).

The differently gendered roles of Hussein and Zaynab translate into the appropriate types of contemporary social activism promoted by Hezbollah. Lara Deeb (2009:249) notes that men are encouraged to work and volunteer with organisations such as Jihad al-Bina in roles such as engineering, management and construction, while women are expected to engage in social-welfare voluntarism. In this way, Zaynab provides the model for the ideal Shi'a woman – a pious individual whose voluntarism

¹⁵⁷ Referring to Imam Hussein, the head of the family and the leader of the Battle (Boumet Beirut 2013).

¹⁵⁸ Referring to Sitt Zaynab, Imam Hussein's sister who played a prominent role in managing care-giving tasks, keeping the family together, and ensuring the dissemination of Hussein's message after his martyrdom (Boumet Beirut 2013).

in health, education or welfare serves as her contribution to the community's development.

Within this gendered division of labour, the headscarf and other sartorial codes are given an important place in marking how women are expected to appear and behave. The headscarf is presented as the equivalent of weapons wielded by men in combat. Men resist by their strength, while women protect themselves and society through wearing the headscarf and veil.¹⁵⁹ Again, this is closely related to the individual norms of *iltizâm*. The committed woman is known as the *multazima*, and she is expected to wear the veil and a long dress that covers her body. The colours that she wears should be dark in order not to attract attention.¹⁶⁰ The veil expresses both a religious and political commitment, in contrast to the traditional headscarf usually worn in Lebanese villages (Chaib 2008:297). The borders between men and women are strictly codified – *multazimât* are expected not to shake hands or mix with men and schools segregate girls and boys starting from the age of nine (girls are also taught different subject matter) (Deeb 2006:107; Le Thomas 2012a:256). These practices should not be seen as merely an attempt to return to tradition, but rather to re-work supposed religious norms as an integral part of what is conceived as 'modernity' (Deeb 2006:32-33). Gendered roles are particularly important in this respect, because the explicit dress and behavioural codes assigned to women become central markers of modernity.

Hezbollah has adopted many of these customs aimed at fixing gender roles from similar practices in Iran. A significant example is the celebration of the *taklîf*, widespread in all schools in Iran and known as the Day of Prayer (Paivandi 2006:132). This ceremony is aimed at nine-year old girls who are said to have reached the age of responsibility (accountability), and encourages them to undertake certain religious obligations, such as praying and fasting, and to begin wearing the headscarf and veil (Le Thomas 2012a:377). *Taklîf* was initiated at the end of the Civil War, first in Hezbollah's network of schools and then with the al-Mahdi scouts (Le

¹⁵⁹ Le Thomas (2012a:256) recounts the story, for example, of a theatre play held in one of the al-Mustafa schools in Nabatieh in 2009, where the father of the heroine tells her that her commitment to wear the veil honours him and makes her a symbol of the resistance, while her brothers are engaged in the armed struggle.

¹⁶⁰ Harb (2010:175) notes that women do not always conform to these codes – some "*multazimât*", especially younger women, are increasingly favouring dresses with brighter colours.

Thomas 2012a:300+377).¹⁶¹

In line with these attitudes towards women's role in society, Hezbollah has not supported legislation at the national level aimed at ensuring equality for women in the family. In 2010, for example, women's rights activists submitted a draft bill regarding the protection of women, including the criminalization of marital rape. This draft bill was completely modified by the parliamentary subcommittee at the urging of Hezbollah's minister, Muhammad Fneich (Merhi N. 2012). In particular, the text was changed to remove the key clause legislating against marital rape (Merhi N. 2012). The subcommittee maintained Article 26, which states that women can only bring cases of domestic and family violence to the civil courts if permitted by religious courts – institutions known to be patriarchal because they consider the male as the head of the household and the family unit as sacrosanct (Khoury 2013b). As a result, while present in the Miqati government (2011-2013), Hezbollah deputies resisted attempts to move marriage and divorce rights into civil courts rather than religious jurisdiction (Khoury 2013b). In March 2014, the whole parliamentary bloc of Hezbollah deputies refused to respond to a petition from the National Coalition for a Law to Protect Women from Domestic Violence, which would have criminalised marital rape (Majed 2014).

In summary, Hezbollah's involvement in Shi'a civil society has distinctly gendered characteristics that are reflected in the organisation's structure and political orientation. The norms set out in the *hâla islâmiyya* and *iltizâm* ascribe fixed gender roles and, as part of this, women are expected to play a central position in the transmission of Hezbollah's ideological tenets to its wider social base codified in their role as mothers, educators and carers. This "gendering of hegemony" is reinforced through historical allegory and reference to Shi'a religious traditions (Deeb 2009:350-353). It is demarcated through detailed sartorial codes and modes of behaviour, which also help to reinforce social norms through mechanisms of consent and

¹⁶¹ Another example of the defining of gender roles is the restriction placed on mixed-sex interaction on social media. At the beginning of 2014, the Hezbollah Deputy Hussein Mussawi defended the fatwa of Imam Khamenei prohibiting "chat" between men and women on Facebook and warning those who participate in social networks by declaring "to those who commented on the fatwa of one of our references that prohibited a particular mode of social networks that lead to moral corruption and to the fall of the safeguards of society, we say God bless those who know their limits and respect them" (Orient le Jour 2014b).

coercion.

5.9 Conclusion

Hezbollah was born in the Bekaa Valley and then expanded through the southern suburbs of Beirut, concurrent with the high levels of Shi'a migration from South Lebanon in the wake of the Israeli occupation. In the absence of a functioning state, Hezbollah has built a highly visible social base in these areas during the 1980s and 1990s. A key reason for Hezbollah's success is the result of its deep penetration of civil society, expressed through its wide network of social institutions and extensive cultural apparatus. This success contrasts with rival organisations such as Amal, which tends to rely upon clientelism and familial links and is largely viewed as permeated by corruption and nepotism.

Hezbollah's growing hegemony within the Shi'a population originated in the context of a society ruled by militias and a weak Lebanese state during the Civil War. The weakness of the Lebanese state in the post Civil War period, whether in terms of service provider or even as guarantor of civil peace, enabled Hezbollah to develop its domination of the Shi'a population concomitant with its military resistance against Israel. The party utilised the reconstruction projects associated with the aftermath of Civil War and Israeli invasion to provide much needed social services to Shi'a populations. Much of this activity focused on key power centres of Hezbollah's rule, notably Dahyeh.

All of these activities have displayed aspects of both consent and coercion, understood in a Gramscian sense. Underpinning this consent and coercion has been a specific religiously inspired conception of the world, captured in the notions of *hâla islâmiyya* and *iltizâm*. An important place has thus been accorded to religious, media, cultural and educational institutions, which form an overarching 'hegemonic apparatus' that operates as a key site of cultural acquisition for the Shi'a population. In this regard, party cadres and activists in the institutions of this apparatus can be seen as Hezbollah organic intellectuals.

Through all these mechanisms, Hezbollah's civil society organisations help to promote a coherent worldview that is able to incorporate a variety of individual and collective interests within the Shi'a population.¹⁶² The construction of Shi'a identity is not static and fixed but an on-going process that is mediated through Hezbollah's institutional networks. Through the conscious application of the notions of *hâla islâmiyya* and *iltizâm*, this process of identity formation delineates the borders of Shi'a belonging, in both its coercive and consensual aspects. It is also distinctively gendered, promoting a particular role for women in Hezbollah organisations as the key mediating link in the transmission of the party's ideology.

Althusser argued that no class can hold state power without exerting its hegemony over and within the ISA. This process does not happen automatically, it is rather the result of a continuing struggle: first against the old ruling classes and their positions in the old and new ISA, then against the exploited class. Similarly, Hezbollah has developed its network of organisations from the mid 1980s until today, overcoming all its competitors within the Shi'a community (notably Amal and the left). Old Shi'a feudal forces disappeared of the political scene, with the exception of the aforementioned Ahmed Kamel Al-As'ad.¹⁶³ The domination of Hezbollah's ideology in its network of organisations allows the continuation and the reproduction of its power over all sectors of the Shi'a population.

Nonetheless, while Hezbollah has utilised these institutions as a means of building popular consent and support (always circumscribed by the borders of coercion), their vision should not be understood as a complete, anti-systemic vision of society as a whole.¹⁶⁴ Hezbollah's process of engagement with civil society has not challenged contemporary hierarchies within Shi'a society nor encouraged any form of independent self-mobilisation from below. Instead, popular activities have been utilised to further inculcate the religious values associated with the *hâla islâmiyya*,

¹⁶² Mona Harb (2010:191) has listed these as material interests (employment or access to collective service), intellectual interests (the resistance cause and the *Wilâyat al-Faqîh* principle), moral interests (based upon *hâla islâmiyya* and *iltizâm*), ludic interests (having access to regular "entertainment" linked to the volunteering and associative sector), and affective interests (to feel fulfilled and satisfied).

¹⁶³ He is the son of the former Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament Kamel Al-As'ad and the grandson of the former Speaker of the Parliament Ahmed Al-As'ad.

¹⁶⁴ Here I would disagree with Rula Abisaab who argues that Hezbollah promotes a version of 'revolutionary Islam' (Abisaab 2006:255).

and are typically carried out in a top-down fashion from the executive levels to the social base. The next chapter explores this tension within Hezbollah's social engagement through the lens of the labour movement.

Chapter 6: Hezbollah and the Lebanese Labour Movement

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines Hezbollah's relationship and orientation to the Lebanese labour movement. Trade unions and other labour organisations have played a prominent role in Lebanon's social struggles over the last four decades. Many workers' protests occurred during the Civil War, led principally by the General Union of Lebanese Workers (GULW), and these continued as successive post Civil War governments implemented those neoliberal policies identified in Chapter 3. The GULW built these actions in a non-sectarian fashion and had significant capacity to mobilise workers and other social forces in the country. Throughout the 2000s, however, sectarian division within the labour movement – deliberately cultivated by the Lebanese government and other political actors – has acted to undermine the work of the GULW. In this context, the GULW has been increasingly bypassed during a renewal of labour struggles that occurred between 2004 and 2013.

In light of Hezbollah's implantation in Lebanese civil society traced in the previous chapter, the party's attitude towards labour struggles provides a revealing case study of the tension that exists between the party's attachment to an emerging Shi'a fraction of the bourgeoisie, on the one hand, and the implications of neoliberal reform for the Shi'a population and poorer layers of Lebanese society on the other. In this light, the party's relationship with the labour movement captures the core of the contradiction that lies in Hezbollah's 'social market' economy approach discussed in Chapter 3. It also helps to illuminate the way in which the organisation has attempted to maintain its hegemonic position within the Shi'a population, despite the very real social differentiation of that population over recent decades.

The chapter shows that Hezbollah has dealt with these tensions through projecting a sectarian discourse that sets the specific interests of Shi'a identity above and opposed to broader class interests. In this way, the specific ideological formulations discussed in the previous chapter have been employed by the party as a means of attempting to consolidate its hegemony over poorer Shi'a neighbourhoods and

workers within its sphere of influence. These tensions continue to persist – and have been reflected in the emergence of new and cross-sectarian labour organisations in recent decades.

6.2 Labour Mobilisation: From the Civil War to the 1990s Strike Wave

During the Civil War, and the rule of militias, trade unions played an important role in organising various demonstrations and civil resistance against continuation of the conflict, sectarian division of the country, the power of militias and the Israeli occupation during the 1980s (Al-Amir Najde 2012; Dirani 2012). In fieldwork conducted for this thesis, labour leaders and activists spoke proudly of this record.

Adib Bou Habib, head of the Printing Press Employees Federation, founder of the Lebanese Observatory of the Rights of Workers and Employees (LORWE) and ex-member of the LCP, recounts that: “federations and trade unions continued during the Civil War to play a role for the workers by fighting for increased wages and inflation adjustment, as well as access to social insurance. The trade union movement was the conscience of the people” (Bou Habib 2012). A distinctive feature of this role was the attempt by federations and unions to organise across the sectarian lines that were becoming increasingly entrenched. Ahmad Dirani, member of the LORWE and ex-member of OCAL, highlighted this characteristic of labour work, noting that: “during the Civil War, the trade unions organized demonstrations in 1987 and 1988 that gathered workers from both sides of Beirut for the unity of the country. This was important because it existed outside of the dynamics of the Civil War, and against the system of militias” (Dirani 2012). Likewise, Ghassan Sleibe, regional coordinator of the International Union of Public Service Workers and ex-trade unionist in the GUWL, spoke of how “Federations and Unions organised many mobilizations during the Civil War. In 1987, several demonstrations occurred at the initiative of federations and unions in Beirut to unite workers and to oppose the Civil War” (Sleibe 2012).

Between 1985 and 1989, more than 114 collective protests took place in opposition

to the Civil War.¹⁶⁵ The increasing number and diversity of demonstrations in these years expressed the frustration of the population with increasing socio-economic difficulties such as the remarkable 400 percent inflation rate of 1987 (Sleibe 1999:156-157), as well as anger with the activities of militias.¹⁶⁶ These protests also took place during a period of intense internal conflicts within political organisations of the same front, such as the battle between the Kataeb and Lebanese Forces (LF), or the disputes between Amal, the PSP and LCP (Sleibe 1999:160-161). In this context, the role of the GULW and other trade unions took on growing importance.

In May 1987, the first national general trade union conference occurred under the title of “No to the Civil War, Yes to reconciliation, No to the policy of starvation of the state, Yes to the legitimate social demands”, with the participation of the GULW, two teachers’ trade unions, trade unions of liberal professions, trade unions of craftsmen, the League of Teachers of Primary and Secondary Public Schools, the Federation of Agricultural Workers and the United Committee of the Workers of the Public Administration (Sleibe 1999:159). At the end of the conference, these organisations issued a number of decisions addressing national, economic, financial, monetary and social issues (Sleibe 1999:159). This meeting, in which the league of teachers of primary and secondary public schools and public administrations employees were present and participated, played a key role in the organisation of alternative union structures in later decades (see below).

A second conference was held in August 1987 with the same organisations, in addition to student, women, cultural and social committees, this time under the title: “Against the policy of starvation of the state, and for an independent, sovereign and united state that believes in democracy and a life with dignity and social justice” (Sleibe 1999:160). This conference led to a cross-sectarian nationwide mobilisation on October 15 1987, which saw various unions and the GULW organise marches throughout the country that eventually came together in front of the Lebanese

¹⁶⁵ These included hunger strikes, marches of Muslim and Christian women, sit ins in front the parliament, labour strikes against the kidnapping of workers, cultural exhibitions, marches of the handicapped for peace and human rights from Halba to Tyr, strike of the GULW for 5 days which culminated with demonstrations (Sleibe 1999:143-144).

¹⁶⁶ Adib Bou Habib: “People opposed increasingly the destruction of the society by the militias” (Bou Habib 2012).

National Museum in Beirut. This museum was on the confrontation line between a divided East and West Beirut, and workers from both sides gathered at the spot (Sleibe 2012; Al-Muntada al-Ishtirâkî 2012b:4-8). They demonstrated for the unity of the country and raised four additional main demands: an end to the Civil War, liberation of the territories occupied by Israel, reassertion of the authority of the state throughout all Lebanon and defence of workers' rights (Bou Habib 2012). A few weeks later, on November 5 1987, an open-ended general strike was launched that lasted for five days. During this strike, further demonstrations were organised throughout the country with workers and demonstrators from both sides of Beirut gathering again in front of the Museum (Sleibe 2012; Al-Muntada al-Ishtirâkî 2012b:4-8). Independent estimates put the crowd's size at 60,000, a very significant mobilisation given the Civil War conditions existing at the time (Baroudi 1998:534).

In examples such as these, the GULW mobilised throughout the Civil War around the issues of sectarianism and the specific concerns of workers; notably the declining value of wages (as a result of inflation) and the provision of social insurance to all workers (Bou Habib 2012). The GULW was the only significant nationally-organised force that had cross-sectarian representation and emphasized unity of the country and opposition to the Civil War. Between 1983 and 1991, its leadership was dominated by members or sympathisers of the LNM, which included most nationalist and leftist forces (Sleibe 1999:64).

In the years following the end of the Civil War, this social weight continued to be asserted in demonstrations and strikes throughout the country. In 1992, for example, the GULW organised strikes and demonstrations in protest against inflation, the high cost of living and the management of the economic crisis. Despite threats from the Syrian Vice President Abdel Halim Khaddam against GULW leaders – who had been summoned to Damascus by the Syrian government – the strikes lasted for three days (Bou Habib 2012; Dirani 2012, Al-Muntada al-Ishtirâkî 2012b:4-8).¹⁶⁷ Eventually the GULW called off the strikes, but nonetheless, the Karama government resigned in face of the social mobilisations and new elections were organized (Al-Muntada al-Ishtirâkî 2012b:4-8).

¹⁶⁷ At the time, the Syrian army – in alliance with some Lebanese politicians – held control of the country's political system.

Following the election of Hariri in 1992, the GULW presented the new government with a list of demands that included wage increases, expansion of workers' fringe benefits, consumer price regulations, rent controls, respect for the autonomy and independence of the labour movement, and incorporating the views of federations and unions into the reconstruction and economic recovery plans (Baroudi 1998:536). Despite the union movement's demonstrated capacity to mobilise, these demands were not addressed by Hariri. As a result, further national strikes and demonstrations were called in 1994 with essentially the same demands as the 1992 strikes (in addition to concerns around the lack of publicly owned social services). In September 1994, the GULW submitted more detailed demands to the government, published a few months later in a 'program of action' (Baroudi 1998:537). Indicative of the specific character of neoliberalism under Hariri discussed in Chapter 3 – specifically the private sector-led focus on urban reconstruction – the main slogan raised by the GULW in this program was "Build Humans and not Stones" (Bou Habib 2012).

On July 19 1995, a further general strike was called that was only stopped following the deployment of the army and security services against striking workers (Sleibe 1999). At the same time, the government passed a law that forbid any gathering of more than five people or participation in demonstrations. Social struggles nonetheless continued throughout 1995 and 1996, particularly following the government's refusal to increase public sector wages. During these two years, public school teachers suspended grading of the official baccalaureate high school exams to pressure the government for wage increase. Their actions were particularly effective because the fate of about 60,000 students hung in the balance. Likewise, university professors launched a strike in February 1996, and further strikes were called by the GULW (Baroudi 1998:537). In response, the government declared a state of emergency and sent security forces to break the strikes (Baroudi 1998:538). Despite this repression, some gains were won through the mid-1990s strike wave, including a three-fold increase in wages between 1993 and 1996. Real wages, however, continued to fall, as the government refused any indexation to inflation (Baroudi 1998:544).

6.3 Demobilisation and Cooption

As this 1990s wave of strikes unfolded, a clear strategy to undercut the power of the GULW and associated federations and unions became evident. According to Adib Bou Habib, this strategy was jointly elaborated by the main political elites in Lebanon at the time (despite their different interests and rivalries): the Hariri government, Hezbollah, Amal, and other Syrian-government aligned forces such as the Ba'th party and SSNP (Bou Habib 2012; Dirani 2012). The latter parties played a critical role in this process since all Lebanese Labour ministries between 1993 and 2005 were controlled by political forces close to Syria. In the main, this strategy rested upon two essential pillars: (1) establishing rival federation and union bodies organised along sectarian lines, and (2) intervention in the internal affairs of the GULW itself. Through these means, the Lebanese political elite attempted to weaken the ability of the GULW to mobilise across sectarian lines, and to subordinate the labour movement to the priorities of the government's economic reform measures.

State intervention in the GULW started as early as 1993 when the Minister of Labour Abdallah Amin, a member of the Ba'th party, attempted to revive an older trade union body, the Federal Confederation of Sectoral Unions. He planned to bring in new legislation that would permit the involvement of the state in GULW affairs (Bou Habib 2012; Dirani 2012; Abdallah 2012; Gharib 2012). This initiative failed and, in its place, the Minister of Labour began to issue licenses for the creation of new federations and unions, mostly divided along sectarian lines and with little real presence on the ground. In 1993, 41 new trade unions and five new federations were licensed, a very significant jump on the 62 trade unions and 22 federations that existed the year before (Bou Habib 2012; Dirani 2012; Abdallah 2012; Gharib 2012). These new labour bodies, as Ghassan Sleibe noted in an interview for this thesis, "were designed to compete with existing trade unions and to limit the autonomy of the union movement" (Sleibe 2012). Importantly, they also impacted the nature of decision making in the GULW because representation in the Executive Council of the GULW was not based on a union's membership size – rather, each union was automatically granted two seats. Moreover, the Executive Council elected the GULW's Political Bureau, composed of 12 members (Bou Habib 2012; Dirani 2012). In this manner,

the new licensed unions invariably linked to political parties close to the Syrian regime (Hezbollah, Ba'th and the SSNP), gained increased weight in the GUWL.

Despite these attempts to undermine the GULW, the strategy of Lebanon's political elite met with significant resistance from the federation's leadership and rank-and-file workers. From 1993 to 1998, a series of intense political struggles emerged within the GUWL between non-sectarian and leftist forces, on the one hand, and the government and Syrian-linked forces on the other.¹⁶⁸ It was in the context of these struggles that the Hariri government promulgated the 1995 law against 'unapproved' public demonstrations (see above) and, in 1997, arrested the GULW's President and Vice President because they had refused to allow seven new unions established by Amal and the Ba'ath to join the federation and participate in its elections (Bou Habib 2012; Sleibe 2012). The 1997 elections proved to be an important turning point seeing a contest between, Elias Abou Rizk (one of those arrested by the government), supported by the left and democratic trade unions, and Ghanim Al-Zoghby, supported by the Ministry of Labour and the SSNP, Hezbollah, the Ba'th party and Amal. Zoghby won the election but was only in office for one year, unable to decisively defeat the support base of Abou Rizk (Abdallah 2012; Al-Muntada al-Ishtirâkî 2012b:4-8). When Abou Rizk returned to office between 1998 and 2001, attempts were made to unite the GUWL across party and sectarian lines and to mobilise against the policies of the new Hoss government. However, with the increased weight of pro-Syrian federations and trade unions in the GULW leadership (who supported Hoss), Abou Rizk's attempt to renew labour mobilisations proved unsuccessful (Habib 2012; Sleibe 2012). Between 1998 and 2000, the GUWL organised only two demonstrations against the government (in April 1999 and July 2000), both of which were poorly attended (Baroudi 2002). This was despite the intensification of neoliberal policies through this period (see Chapter 3), while thousands of workers were also laid off in 2000 from failing economic

¹⁶⁸ In 1993, the left backed candidate Elias Abou Rizk, who won the GULW elections against Antoine Bechara, who had allied with the authorities and the Ministry of Labour (Baroudi 1998). Castro Abdallah (2012), LCP member and President of the FENASOL, explains that it was Antoine Bechara's move towards an alliance with the state that pushed the left to vote for Elias Abou Rizk. In 1995, the new Minister of Labour As'ad Hardan, a member of the SSNP, encouraged the Federation of Independent Authorities (representing workers in railway, port, electricity and water sectors, and which was led by Bechara), as well as the Federation of Bank Employees and the Federation of Airline Company Employees to suspend their membership in the GUWL executive council. These Federations refused to participate in the 1995 and 1996 strike wave (Bou Habib 2012; Dirani 2012; Sleibe 2012).

establishments. More than 8,000 workers petitioned the Ministry of Labour in 1999 and early 2000 to object to their dismissals from around 40 failing establishments (Baroudi 2000:88).

By 2001, the Lebanese state had achieved virtually full control of the leadership of the GULW following the election of Ghassan Ghosn as President. Ghosn's candidacy was supported by the government and the March 8 forces, including Hezbollah, Amal, SSNP and the Ba'th. In the decade following Ghosn's election, the GULW was progressively restructured along sectarian lines. At the time of writing, Ghosn remains in the presidency, and 10 out of 12 members of the GULW's leadership are affiliated with the March 8 Alliance.¹⁶⁹ On the Executive Council, March 8-allied members hold 44 seats out of a total of 66. A number of independent and left-wing federations have deserted the GULW due to its sectarian character.¹⁷⁰

6.4 Hezbollah's Intervention in the Labour Movement

Hezbollah's prominent position in the GULW leadership reflects its will to create new rival and sectarian federations and unions as a means of building a base in the GULW structures. To this end, the party has established numerous federations and trade unions across different sectors whose leadership is composed solely of Shi'a members and which are politically dominated by Hezbollah. The most important example of this is the al-Wafa federation (which was first established in 1988 as al-Wafa Bekaa federation) as it was only composed of trade unions from this region – mostly bringing together workers in agriculture, construction, and hospitals (Yassin 2012).¹⁷¹ In 2000, only five trade unions were linked to al-Wafa with around 400 members in total (Bedran and Zbeeb 2000:223). But over the last decade it has

¹⁶⁹ These March 8-aligned members are Ghassan Ghosn (originally SSNP, but today close to Nabih Berri), Hassan Faqih (Amal), Saad Al-Din Hamidi Saqr (Al-Jama' al-Islamiyya), Ali Yassin (Hezbollah), Boutros Saade, (SSNP), Ali Mussawi (Amal), Ahmad Zbidi (Hezbollah), Fawzi Sayyid (Ba'th), Bechara Chai (Independent close to Amal), Joseph Richa (FPM) (Anonym 2012b)

¹⁷⁰ These federations include the Federation of Bank Employees, the Federation of Print and Media Employees, the National Federation of Chemical Workers, Federation of Construction Workers and Scaffolders, and the Federation of Independent Trade Unions.

¹⁷¹ 1) Trade Union of workers' hospitals in the Bekaa (187 members registered); 2) Trade Union of workers' vegetable markets in the Bekaa Valley (32 members registered) 3) Trade Union of workers' construction sector and its derivatives in Baalbek (45 members registered); 4) Trade Union of workers and fish farmers in the Bekaa Valley (54 members registered); 5) Trade Union of workers' cooperatives in the Bekaa (92 members registered) (Bedran and Zbeeb 2000:222-224).

expanded to Beirut and the South of Lebanon, bringing in a wider range of economic sectors (Itihâd Al-Wafâ` 2014). There are currently eight trade unions affiliated to al-Wafa,¹⁷² representing around 2,500 workers according to its current head, Ali Taher Yassin, who was interviewed for this thesis (Yassin 2012).

Ali Taher Yassin is now on the executive body of the GULW representing Hezbollah. He explained that the role of al-Wafa is to protect the rights of the workers, but added that the union is “linked to Hezbollah and follows its line. We belong to Hezbollah”. The main reason that Hezbollah first established new trade unions in the Bekaa, according to Yassin, was that trade unions in the region were not linked to the party, despite the fact that the region was dominated by Hezbollah and was a majority Shi’a area. Most of the heads of federations and trade unions linked to Hezbollah are members of the party, and are required to follow the party ideologically, religiously and politically (Yassin 2014). The executive council of al-Wafa is only composed of Shi’a members (Itihâd Al-Wafâ` 2014a).

In addition to al-Wafa, Hezbollah has also established rival federations in the agricultural sector,¹⁷³ the health sector¹⁷⁴ and the transport sector.¹⁷⁵

In this latter sector, the first taxi drivers’ federation was set up in 1969 by a group of leftist taxi drivers with the support of Kamal Jumblatt, Minister of the Interior and leader of the PSP. It succeeded in negotiating the affiliation of taxi drivers to the NSSF in 1982 (Abi Yaghi 2012). However, the federation was weakened during the Hariri government when Minister Abdallah Al-Amin (1992–95) granted Amal a licence to create a new federation in the sector. The appointment of Hezbollah ally Trad Hamadeh as Minister of Labour in 2005 then led to the granting of another licence to

¹⁷² Trade Union of workers’ cooperatives in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, Trade Union of technicians and professional workers in the domain of electricity in Beirut; Trade Union of workers in the cultivation of vegetables in the South, Trade Union of printing press workers in the South, Trade Union of workers’ hospitals in the Bekaa; Trade Union of workers’ vegetable markets in the Bekaa Valley, Trade Union of workers’ construction sector and its derivatives in the Bekaa; Trade Union of workers and fish farmers in the Bekaa Valley (Itihâd al-Wafâ` 2014)

¹⁷³ The Federation of Trade Union of Workers in the Cooperatives, Institutions and Vegetable Markets headed by Omar Subhi Abdallah; and the Federation of Trade Unions of Farmers in Lebanon (known as Inma’) headed by Jihad Abbas Al-Baluq (see Chapter 3 for further discussion of the sectarian role of this union). In both these federations, all members of the executive council are Shi’a.

¹⁷⁴ Federation of Worker and Health Trade Union in the Bekaa, headed by Berbir Othman Hassan.

¹⁷⁵ The Loyalty Federation of Transport in Lebanon headed by Abdlallah Hamadeh

a third federation also in the transport sector (Abi Yaghi 2012)¹⁷⁶ called, “the Loyalty Federation” (al-Wala’), which is affiliated to Hezbollah according to its head Abdallah Hamadeh (2012). The al-Wala’ Federation brings together four other trade unions: General Trade Union for the Drivers of Public Minibuses in Lebanon, Trade Union of Transport Drivers and Workers in Lebanon, Trade Union of Van Drivers of Schools and Universities in the Bekaa and the Union of Drivers for Student Transport in the South (Itihâd al-Wafâ` 2014b). The executive council of al-Wala’ is solely composed of Shi’a members and is politically dominated by Hezbollah (Itihâd al-Wafâ` 2014b).

The party organises its work in these affiliated federations and unions through its Trade Union and Workers’ Unit (TUWU) headed by Hashim Salhab (Itihâd al-Wafâ` 2013). The orientation of the TUWU closely echoes the ‘social market’ approach analysed in Chapter 3. While claiming to prioritise the defence of workers, its public statements and annual reports tend to call for harmonious economic development and a dialogue that unites business owners and employees towards the greater national interest of Lebanon (Wahdat al-niqâbât wa al-‘ummâl al-markaziyya fî Hizb Allâh 2008).¹⁷⁷ The TUWU’s position towards neoliberal measures such as privatisation – as evidenced in the significant case of the MEA sell-off discussed in Chapter 3 – does not display any principled opposition, but rather calls for the balancing of interests and the judgement on a case-by-case basis.¹⁷⁸ At the same time, while employing this cross-class discourse, the TUWU also specifically emphasizes Shi’a religious reference points – including the commemoration of historic Shi’a martyrs (such as Imam Mahdi) as well as that of Hezbollah political and military figures (Wahdat al-niqâbât wa al-‘ummâl al-markaziyya fî Hizb Allâh 2008; Wahdat al-niqâbât wa al-‘ummâl al-markaziyya fî Hizb Allâh 2009). Workers’ celebrations organised by the TUWU, such as Labour Day, are also held in religious institutions controlled by Hezbollah.

¹⁷⁶ During Trad Hamadeh’s period as Minister of Labour he granted licenses to a total of 22 new trade unions (Khaddaj 2010a).

¹⁷⁷ (See for example Wahdat al-niqâbât wa al-‘ummâl al-markaziyya fî Hizb Allâh 2008; Wahdat al-niqâbât wa al-‘ummâl al-markaziyya fî Hizb Allâh 2009).

¹⁷⁸ In a 2009 statement, the Unit argues that “each privatisation should be analysed and studied according to the national interests of the country, whether they are positive or negative, to resolve any controversy around this subject” (Wahdat al-niqâbât wa al-‘ummâl al-markaziyya fî Hizb Allâh 2009).

6.5 A Renewal of Labour Struggles: 2004-2011

As discussed in Chapter 3, the early 2000s marked an important moment in the consolidation of Lebanese neoliberalism following the IMF-led negotiations around the Paris I and II Agreements from 2001-2003. Despite the significant economic changes that occurred in the wake of these agreements, opposition by the GULW to government economic reform was largely absent, with no major mobilisations against the 2001 IMF agreements, the acceleration of privatization, or the drastic reduction in employer contributions to the NSSF in the same year (38.5 percent to 23.5 percent) (Nasnas 2007:90). A new wave of labour mobilisation would emerge, however, which lay largely outside the structures and initiative of the GULW. The full implications of the progressive weakening of the GULW – and its subordination to the Lebanese Labour Ministry and the March 8 political forces – would be demonstrated throughout this renewal of the country's labour struggles. Moreover, Hezbollah's orientation towards these new movements has been characterised by prevarication and an unwillingness to encourage independent mass struggles. At all decisive conjunctures, Hezbollah has prioritised its own sectarian interests, frequently counterposing these against a cross-denominational labour movement.

In 2004, GULW called a general strike and protests spread throughout the country against rising prices and inflation. The country was paralysed by the mobilisations; all political forces were compelled to take a position. According to the President of the Federation of the Public Transport Drivers, Abdel Al-Amir Nadjé (2002), interviewed for this thesis, the GULW's bureaucracy, under pressure from the political elite, wanted to stop the strike. Workers, however, especially in the transport sector, opposed this decision and called for its continuation (Chiit 2009b; Al-Amir Nadjé 2012). The GULW leadership withdrew from the strike, allowing the army to intervene. The army then opened fire on demonstrators and strikers, who were gathered in Hay Al-Sellom, one of the poorer Shi'a neighbourhoods of southern Beirut, killing five workers and injuring dozens. The main political parties, including Hezbollah, supported the army saying: "The army is the red line", while most of the media portrayed the strike as a "barbaric attempt to attack the army" (Chiit 2009b). The GULW did not issue any declaration and remained silent on the killing of the five

workers. Ali Taher Yassin (2012), Hezbollah trade unionist, in an interview for this thesis, characterised the events of Hay Al-Sellom in 2004 as an attempt to create instability and chaos in the country by some parties, while regretting the repression and acknowledging that some people had legitimate demands. He nevertheless went on to say that Hay Al-Sellom's neighbourhood had a particular situation, with family and tribal dynamics, instead of the social dynamics created by the strikes and the demands of the people (Yassin 2012). Abdallah Hamadeh (2012), head of the federation of al-Wala' linked to Hezbollah, also argued that Hay Al-Sellom events were the result of provocateurs and armed men that had nothing to do with the demonstrators and unions' strikes.

Following the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon, a new government was formed by Siniora on July 19 2005. This government included Hezbollah representatives for the first time in Lebanese history, including Trad Hamadeh as Minister of Labour. In this position, Hezbollah was faced with a major mobilisation for the defence of public services by the teachers' union in May 2006, which gathered at least a quarter of a million people and forced the government to withdraw and cancel some of its decisions such as: "diminishing the pensions, increasing VAT from 10 to 12 percent, raising fuel prices by 30 percent and imposing short term contracts on government workers and teachers" (Chiit 2006; Gharib 2012).

Hezbollah participated massively in these protests, alongside the FPM and the LCP (Qualander 2006). The ruling parties of March 14 attacked the movement, saying it was mostly Shi'a orchestrated and was infiltrated by Syrian workers. The Siniora government claimed that the demonstrations were not workers' demonstrations but an attempted coup planned by the Shi'a to take power – this was despite the fact that the demonstration brought together workers from all denominations according to one participant interviewed for this thesis (Chiit 2009a; Gharib 2012). The GULW was again not a leading force in the mobilisation.

In January 2007, a demonstration called by the GULW against the Paris III agenda gathered only 2,000 people. One of the reasons for this small size was the fact that the March 8 forces, including Hezbollah who were in the opposition at the time, did

not mobilise for the protest. While critical of some aspects of the Paris Conference, Hezbollah explained that they did not want to jeopardise its outcomes (Achcar 2007). Indeed, Hezbollah parliamentary deputies, despite their resignation from the government in December 2006, supported the reform program presented by Prime Minister Siniora to the conference itself (Catusse and Abi Yaghi 2011:73). Nonetheless, following this small demonstration in January and the increasing tensions between the opposition and the government, the March 8 Coalition including Amal, Hezbollah and FPM, called for a general strike on January 23 2007.¹⁷⁹ Although this began as a largely bureaucratic initiative, it turned rapidly into a popular uprising with the main roads of transit in the country blocked. This situation overwhelmed the strike's initiators and they decided to end the strike declaring that it might "create confessional tensions" (Chiit 2009a). Hezbollah agreed to this termination of the strike, refusing suggestions by General Aoun to launch a rally in front of the government headquarters (ICG 2007:2). According to radical left activist Bassem Chiit (2009a), the March 8 coalition feared that this popular movement was moving towards taking up socio-economic issues across sectarian lines, and the organisation preferred to emphasize only the interests of the Shi'a.

One of the characteristics of Hezbollah's orientation towards these social and labour struggles, particularly those that were to emerge through 2008, was its unwillingness to support large-scale, independent mass mobilisations of workers, preferring to rely instead upon small-scale, armed actions against its political opponents. In this sense, Hezbollah has reinforced a sectarian dynamic within these struggles, undercutting any cross-sectarian impulse that they may have potentially held. A good example of this is given in an aborted general strike of May 2008, which was called for by federations and trade unions of taxi drivers, teachers and farmers, demanding an increase in the minimum wage, higher public wages (which had been frozen since

¹⁷⁹ The main point of contention was the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL), which was deemed as unconstitutional and illegal for Hezbollah and its allies in March. Hezbollah MP Ali Fayyad argued that it undermined Lebanese judicial sovereignty and put Lebanon at the mercy of foreign influences, while it exacerbated internal divisions. Hezbollah and its March 8 allies therefore strongly opposed it, triggering parliamentary and cabinet crises and several months of hostile popular protest in front of the Prime Minister's office when in November 2006 Shi'a members of the cabinet suspended participation to protest the government bypassing the parliamentary blockade and its signature of the draft agreement of the STL. Under the Lebanese constitution, parliamentary approval was needed for the creation of the STL. However, due to opposition by the 8 March alliance, the parliament did not vote to ratify the agreement. Hezbollah saw this strike as a way to put pressure on the March 14 led government.

1996), and measures against the country's runaway inflation (Catusse 2009).¹⁸⁰ The strike, initially called for May 7, did not take place following the outbreak of street fighting between opposing political forces. The March 14 political forces, which at the time held governmental power, raised the threat of shutting down Hezbollah's telecommunications network. In response, Hezbollah declined to mobilise for the general strike and instead launched armed attacks on neighbourhoods in Beirut that were known to be support bases of March 14. These fights broke popular mobilisation in the streets and any possibility of joint worker struggles across sectarian lines (Catusse 2009).¹⁸¹ As explained by trade unionist Ahmad Dirani, Hezbollah's military intervention was "aimed against the possibility of a large trade union and workers mobilisation taking the lead against the government in a democratic way. Hezbollah did not favour this option" (Dirani 2012). Dirani argued that such a mobilisation would not only have achieved social gains around economic issues but could also have addressed the threat to Hezbollah's telecommunication system.

In June 2011, a new government led by the March 8 forces and headed by Najib Miqati as Prime Minister was formed. Hezbollah held two ministries in this government: the Ministry of Agriculture (Hussein Hajj Hassan) and a Minister of State (Muhammad Fneich). The experience of Hezbollah in this government is instructive, as it indicates the party's unwillingness to support significant reform measures aimed at addressing the situation of workers in Lebanon. Debates around these measures focused particularly on an initiative advanced by the Minister of Labour Charbel Nahas, soon after the formation of the new government. Nahas' initiative contained a number of significant social reforms, particularly the goal of establishing a "social wage", which would adjust the salaries of workers and private sector employees in line with the rate of inflation, and also expand the range of subsidies (Traboulsi 2014:51+55). These measures would be funded by higher taxation on finance and other rentier activities and, in this respect, would have represented a reversal of the weakening of labour vis-à-vis capital that had been characteristic of the previous

¹⁸⁰ An earlier strike in January 2008 had been called along the same demands. These protests escalated into deadly battles in Beirut's southern suburbs, with roads cut off and taxis refusing to take passengers.

¹⁸¹ A few weeks after the cessation of hostilities and the formation of a new national unity government, the minimum wage was raised from LP 300,000 (\$200) to LP 500,000 (\$333), which was still far from the demands of the workers and as we said previously it only benefited the private sector and not the employees of the public sector (Zaraket 2014).

years (Lebanese Observatory of the Rights of Workers and Employees (LORWE) 2013b:6-7). The initiative also proposed that transport allowances be included in salaries, and the establishment of a universal health care system (LORWE 2013b:6-7).

Nahas' initiative was opposed by a range of different political forces. Initially, the inclusion of universal health coverage in a social wage was rejected by Amal's Minister of Health, Ali Hassan Khalil, who opposed the plan because he believed it encroached on his domain of responsibility (Nahas 2012). This was despite the fact that the NFSS came under the Labour Ministry, and therefore was the responsibility of Nahas not Khalil (Traboulsi 2014:55). Lebanese journalist Zbeeb has argued that Khalil's opposition was due to the fact "that the Ministry of Health and Social Security are part of Nabih Berri's share in the pie and he can not concede his share while the shares of other political forces remain in place" (Zbeeb 2012a). Likewise, trade unionist Adib Bou Habib claimed in an interview for this thesis that "Amal and its Minister of Health did not want this project because they wanted to use the universal health coverage for their own political and clientelist interests (Bou Habib 2012). Following pressure from Amal and Hezbollah in October 2011, Nahas agreed to separate the universal health coverage from its wage reform project (Traboulsi 2014:55-56). The latter would become the new line of battle inside of the government.

Nahas' first wage initiative included a rise in the minimum wage to 890,000 LP (\$593) plus transport allowances. This proposition, however, was firmly rejected by private sector employers, who instead reached an agreement called the "Consensual Agreement on Wage Reform" with the leadership of the GULW and the Prime Minister Najib Miqati (LORWE 2013b:6-7). This agreement was less advantageous to workers as it did not include transport allowances and would only raise the minimum wage to 675,000 LP (\$450) (Orient Le Jour 2012a). The private sector argued that adding transportation allowances to the basic salary would increase costs to an unsustainable level and damage the private sector in particular (The Daily Star 2012).

The Consensual Agreement (CA) was adopted by the government in December 2011, with the two Hezbollah ministers, Muhammad Fneich and Hussein Hajj Hassan, voting to support it rather than the Nahas initiative. In reference to the role of the GULW, Fneich argued: “workers and employees reject the wage adjustment plan proposed by the Minister of Labour Charbel Nahas” (Orient Le Jour 2011d). Hezbollah’s position, however, was strongly marked by the contradictions inherent to its ‘social market’ standpoint and the different demands emanating from its social base. The day after the vote, following widespread popular criticisms against the position of its ministers, Hezbollah shifted its position to support a strike and demonstration organised against the CA. Hezbollah ministers explained that their earlier vote in favour of the CA was the result of a lack of coordination with Nahas, and not in opposition to the plan itself. Indeed, they claimed that the wages proposed in the CA were far too low (Al-Akhbar 2012).

Hezbollah, however, declined to support a demonstration in support of the Nahas Plan on December 15, which drew more than 6,000 people in Beirut (Al-Akhbar English 2011).¹⁸² At this demonstration, which the author attended, many protestors could be seen expressing opposition through placards, chants and group discussions about the role of the GULW.¹⁸³ One activist, Farah Kobeissi (Al-Akhbar English 2011), who was interviewed by al-Akhbar newspaper, accused the GULW of collusion with the government. She added that workers do not trust the GULW anymore, and that “we tried to give it a chance, but they betrayed us, all the workers and the independent unions, on December 12 [the day the cabinet passed Miqati's plan]”, while adding that the GULW’s “decision is not taken democratically by the workers, but by a bunch of bureaucratic people that are very close to the employers, the government and the political forces in power” (Al-Akhbar English 2011). She argued that the GULW's ties with the government and the major political forces in power hindered its ability to be truly representative of workers (Al-Akhbar English 2011). Indeed, not only did the GULW oppose Nahas’ plan, they also issued a complaint against him to the International Labour Organisation, accusing him of

¹⁸² This demonstration was also not backed by the GULW, which called for a different mobilisation on December 27 that was eventually cancelled. The representative of Hezbollah in the GULW, Ali Yassin, stated that the party decided not to support or mobilise for the 15th of December action due to its opposition of the GULW executive. (Interview Ali Taher Yassin, March 2012, Beirut).

¹⁸³ Personal observations, 15 December 2011.

fragmenting the trade union movement in Lebanon (LORWE 2013b:15).

A final round of parliamentary voting on the CA and the Nahas initiative took place in mid-January 2012. In the debate around this vote, Nahas proposed a minimum wage of 868,000 LP (\$578.6) plus transport allowances (Traboulsi 2014:55). Despite numerous meetings between Nahas and Hezbollah, Amal, and the Prime Minister, no agreement was reached. His plan was eventually rejected in favour of the CA, and he resigned from the cabinet in February of 2012 (Traboulsi 2014:56). Hezbollah trade unionist Ali Taher Yassin justified the vote and GUWL's refusal of the Nahas plan stating that:

“It was a special situation, you have to weigh how much you can mobilise and how much you want to destabilise this government. With strikes and demonstrations you put in danger the stability and the security of the country. The current situation (beginning of 2012) does not allow this, this would be very dangerous, and we have to take this into account. The GUWL did not want to hold the responsibility of putting in danger the stability of the country, it was too dangerous, it was a wise decision. The national and regional political scene does not allow all these changes, especially when you have the other party (March 14) trying its best to create instability. We decided to preserve the stability of the country, the project of Charbel Nahas is right, demands are right but to realize it now, it is very difficult. There is also a way to realise this project. He was alone, he did not share his plan with the three heads of state, with the economists, retailers, etc... The country cannot uphold these increase of salaries, we have to check the consequences of such a project.” (Yassin 2012)

Yassin was to echo these sentiments at the CCSD conference, “Reform of Social Policies in Lebanon: From Selective Subsidy Towards Welfare State” in March 2012 (which the author attended), arguing that it would be difficult for workers to raise

further demands around wages due to the lack of stability in the country, and the potential damage that may arise to the Lebanese economy. While declaring that 'humane' salaries are necessary, Yassin argued that these should be reached through negotiation with employers. At the conference he defended the leadership of the GUWL from audience members who complained that the federation no longer represented the interests of workers (Yassin's intervention in the Conference Reform of Social Policies in Lebanon: From Selective Subsidy Towards Welfare State 2012).¹⁸⁴ Other trade unionists linked to Hezbollah, Akram Zeid and Abdallah Hamadeh (head of the al-Wala transport federation), also argued that the party could not support the Nahas initiative because of economic reasons and the potential for instability in the country (Zeid 2012; Hamadeh 2012).¹⁸⁵

In summary, the period 2004-2011 provides a useful illustration of the orientation of Hezbollah towards labour movements in Lebanon. The period witnessed a significant upsurge in labour militancy, marked particularly by the call for general strikes in 2004 and 2008, and the fierce debate around the Nahas initiative in 2011. These struggles revealed the tensions inherent within Hezbollah's claim to represent the poor and marginalised layers of the Shi'a population, alongside its integration into the political elite and increasing linkages to the emerging Shi'a bourgeoisie. At all major points, Hezbollah has expressed a rhetorical concern with issues such as privatisation, the implications of agreements such as Paris III and the decreasing value of real wages. At the same time, it has strongly resisted attempts to mobilise its mass base in a manner that would support independent initiatives across sectarian lines. In general, these tensions have been resolved in favour of neoliberal reform, particularly in those periods in which Hezbollah has held governmental positions.

¹⁸⁴ Pointedly, Yassine's intervention followed that of Nicolas Elie Chammas, President of Beirut Traders Association, with whom he shared the same panel. Chammas attacked Charbel Nahas for promoting a 'Marxist discourse' and an 'atmosphere of class struggle' in the country, adding his support for the CA. Yassine did not respond either directly or indirectly to Chammas.

¹⁸⁵ At the time of writing (January 2015), the increase in wages promised in the CA, has not been implemented and the mechanisms to fund them are still being discussed in commissions in parliament. Hezbollah, although rhetorically supporting the CA agreement, has joined the "technical accountant" discourse shared by March 14 and March 8, as argued by researcher Raed Sharaf (2014), to explain the difficulties to implement the increase in wages as planned in the original agreement. Political parties, including Hezbollah, explain that they have to maintain the existing financial policy and express the threat of economic collapse if the increase in wage is implemented as currently planned and without workers making some sacrifices.

6.6 Alternative Labour Movements in Lebanon?

The 2011 mobilisations around the Nahas plan marked a significant moment in the Lebanese labour movement not least because they indicated the emergence of new organisational structures that have attempted to renew the earlier, cross-sectarian orientation of the GULW. One important example of this is the founding of the Union Coordination Committee (UCC) (*Hay'at tansîq niqâbiyya*).¹⁸⁶ The UCC brings together more than 40 independent trade unions and between 140,000 and 176,000 members, mainly employed in the civil service or as public and private school teachers (Gharib 2012, LORWE 2013b:8). The league of teachers of primary (Public Primary Schools Teachers League in Lebanon (PPSTLL))¹⁸⁷ and secondary schools (the Public Secondary Schools Teachers League in Lebanon (PSSTLL)),¹⁸⁸ which consist respectively of 65,000 and 40,000 members (Catusse and Abi Yaghi 2011:81), have been the driving force of the organisation. Mainly consisting of public employees of the state, the UCC is not legally recognized as a federation or a trade union,¹⁸⁹ but it is nevertheless registered by the Ministry of Culture where its offices are located (Gharib 2012). This status does not officially allow the UCC to organise strikes, but has not prevented it from striking and placing itself at the head of social mobilisations. Leaders of the UCC, such as Hana Gharib and Mahmoud Haidar, have nevertheless expressed that one of their objectives was to transform the leagues of teachers into trade unions and the UCC into a federation of trade unions in the public sector (LORWE 2013a; Al-Hajj 2014a). According to activists interviewed for this thesis, the UCC's democratic organisational structure has helped protect it from attempts by the state and political forces to undermine or intervene in its political affairs as had occurred with the GULW (Bou Habib 2012; Gharib 2012; Sleibe 2012;

¹⁸⁶ There is no official date of establishment of the UCC as it is not an official institution, legally speaking. The UCC came to existence after the end of the Lebanese Civil War through the struggles of its two main organisations Public Primary Schools Teachers League in Lebanon and the Public Secondary Schools Teachers League in Lebanon throughout the 1990s. It was nevertheless the struggle around the salary scale and increase in wages that made the UCC the main workers organisation in the country at the end of 2011 and beginning of 2012.

¹⁸⁷ Established in 1938.

¹⁸⁸ Established in 1980.

¹⁸⁹ Article 15 of the labour law forbids any state employee from "stating or publishing, without the written approval of the head of the directorate, any speech, public statement, or authored work in any subject, or to join professional organisations or unions, or go on strike or instigate others to strike" (Zbeeb 2012b). Moreover, the Lebanese state has always refused to ratify the ILO Convention number 87 on the trade union liberties, and forbids de facto all members of the public administration to join or create an union. Only the federation of teachers in the private sector is recognized as a federation in the UCC.

George Al-Hajj 2012). Indeed, the opposition to the CA was led primarily by the UCC, including the aforementioned demonstration on 15 December 2011.

The growth of the UCC took place in the context of continued labour struggles throughout the country in 2012 and 2013.¹⁹⁰ In the spring and summer of 2012, for example, protests erupted by more than 2,500 contract workers at the electricity company, EdL, demonstrating against the privatisation plans of the government.¹⁹¹ The workers claimed that the Ministry of Energy and Water (MoEW) had failed to provide them with permanent employment, social security, a decent monthly salary and job security (Abou Zaki 2012c). At the time of the protests the minister in charge, Gebran Bassil, a FPM member and nephew of General Aoun, refused to meet the contract workers and described them as troublemakers and outlaws (Abou Zaki 2012c). He also sent in the security services to prevent the strikers from reaching their sit in. His restructuring plan envisioned that 1,800 of these workers would be made redundant. Hezbollah, who had been in charge of the Ministry from July 2005 to November 2006 under Minister Muhammad Fneich, supported the privatisation process;¹⁹² first endorsing Bassil's plan in Cabinet (Al-Akhbar English 2012a), and then voting in favour of a draft law allowing contract workers at Lebanon's state-run electricity company to become full-time employees.¹⁹³ During this period, Hezbollah did not criticise Bassil's vocal and sectarian attacks on the workers' mobilisation, despite the fact that the vast majority of affected workers were Shi'a.¹⁹⁴ The GULW was also absent from supporting the workers, only intervening on the 93rd day of the strike in which they took the side of EdL administration and pressured strikers to end their action (LORWE 2013b:12).¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ During the year 2012, the UCC held 14 strikes, 60 sit-ins, four demonstrations, boycotted exam for two consecutive years and organised two trade union conferences in Beirut (LORWE 2013b:8).

¹⁹¹ Three private companies were offered a contract to manage the distribution of the electric power (system upgrades, notes indexes and collection of bills).

¹⁹² Hezbollah Minister Muhammad Fneich has been an important actor in the ongoing process aimed at privatisation of the EdL, as Minister of Energy and Water between July 2005 and November 2006 (Verdeil 2008 and see chapter 3).

¹⁹³ Under the draft law, all EdL contract workers younger than 58 will take an examination to determine their qualifications, which will be administered by the Civil Service Council (Verdeil 2008).

¹⁹⁴ According to Minister Gebran Bassil 80 percent of the workers belong to non-Christian sects, the majority being Shi'a, and most of them support Berri (Naharnet 2012). A large section of Christian members of parliament opposed the law because they feared that hiring the part-time workers, most of whom are Shi'a, would throw off the composition of EdL's so-called sectarian balance (Abizeid 2014).

¹⁹⁵ The National Federation of Trade Union of Workers and Employees in Lebanon (FENASOL), through its President Castro Abdallah, was the only trade union to support the strike. I visited the EdL workers' occupation and witnessed Castro Abdallah's presence. In August 2014, daily contract workers and collectors were again

In February and March of 2013, massive demonstrations and open-ended strikes were called by UCC-led teachers demanding the implementation of a decision passed by the Minister of Education in 2012 to increase salaries. Tens of thousands of teachers demonstrated throughout the country and the strikes lasted for more than three weeks. The UCC was a major force behind these mobilisations, which have continued throughout 2014 due to the lack of implementation of the proposed wage increase. In this struggle, the UCC has resisted calls by the government to fund the salary increase through shifting the burden onto the poorer layers of society, including suggested measures such as new indirect taxes, a reduction of benefits for teachers, cuts to retirees' pay and an increase in contractual employment (Orient Le Jour 2013c; Andraos 2013).¹⁹⁶ By the summer of 2014, the UCC was still pressuring the government for the implementation of the salary increase that had been agreed to more than two years ago.¹⁹⁷

The teacher's struggles through 2013 and 2014 indicated several salient and inter-related features of the Lebanese labour movement.¹⁹⁸ First, they demonstrated the unwillingness of Hezbollah to support any independent mobilisations of workers, particularly given its participation in government. During these strikes, Hezbollah refused to take a stance within government in support of the salary increases and did not mobilise its membership in the UCC-led actions. On several occasions, Hezbollah representatives opposed these strikes. In November 2013, during a meeting of the southern branch of the Public Secondary Schools Teachers League in

launching an open strike in protest against the decision of the EdL board of directors to limit the number of employees provided full-time jobs to 897 out of the 2,000 workers (The Daily Star 2014a).

¹⁹⁶ The demand of the UCC needs to be set in the context of a 120 percent increase in inflation from 1993 to 2012, while public sector wages increased only 55 percent (Wehbe M. 2013a). It should also be noted that in 2012, the private sector received a salary increase and that Parliament also approved legislation doubling the incomes of judges and university professors (Rifai 2014).

¹⁹⁷ Lebanon's banks and other powerful business interests represented by the Economic Committees (ECs), were opposing this claim stating that it would bankrupt Lebanon's economy, drain the cash-strapped treasury, increase inflation and reduce citizens' purchasing power. On April 11 2014 bankers held a one-day strike against the proposed measure (Abizeid 2014).

¹⁹⁸ Other struggles that emerged in 2013 should also be noted, such as attempts by the Federation of Bank Employees to defend the last remaining collective agreement in Lebanon, protests by employees of the Spinneys supermarket chain to defend their right to organise, and mobilisations by contract workers and those without fixed contracts in the education sector who were seeking protection and continuity of employment. The UCC was again prominent in solidarity with these struggles, including a petition for a million person rally, which they built through campaigning across the country and in meetings with local popular organisations. The EdL strike has continued into 2014, including a strike on 15 April. Workers at EdL have expressed their agreement with the UCC's attempts to increase the salary scale (Wehbe M. 2012).

Lebanon, Hezbollah (and Amal) representatives argued against a UCC strike planned for November 26, while a majority of the remaining participants voted in favour (Sharaf 2014). Furthermore, Hezbollah teachers did not participate in open-ended strikes called by the UCC, and refused the calls of Hanna Gharib for escalation of the protests (Sharaf 2014). Likewise, during a marking boycott called by the UCC in the summer of 2014, Hezbollah representatives called for an end to the boycott and supported a parliamentary decision to automatically pass all students in an attempt to break the action (Al-Hajj 2014b). Nonetheless, the UCC decided to continue the boycott and to join further strikes called by various sectors of the public administration to implement an increased salary scale (Orient Le Jour 2014d; Al-Hajj 2014b).

Despite its large teacher base and network of schools discussed in the previous chapter, only a small number of Hezbollah teachers participate in the UCC while many have let their membership in the organisation lapse.¹⁹⁹ Hezbollah has argued that this was due to the UCC's strategy of militancy, rather than their preferred course of consensus and dialogue (Zoghbi 2013). Indeed, the re-election of Nehme Mahfoud, President of the private schools teachers' federation, in April 2013, by an overwhelming majority and without any political endorsement from Hezbollah (or, indeed, of the March 14 bloc) indicated the party's lack of support or activity within the federation.²⁰⁰

In addition to Hezbollah's abstention from these strikes, the teacher's strike further confirmed the marginalisation of the GULW, which had been undermined by the erstwhile attempts to bring it under state control. Instead, the prominent role of the UCC pointed to the emergence of a new institutional configuration within the trade union movement. These trends were captured by the journalist Lysandra Ohrstrom, commenting on the 2013 mobilisations:

“After being fractured by sectarian schisms and hijacked to serve the interests of Lebanon's political class for more than

¹⁹⁹ One estimate put the number of lapsed Hezbollah members in the UCC at 1,600 out of a total of 2,200 members (Zoghbi 2013).

²⁰⁰ Mahfoud beat the Hezbollah-supported candidate by nearly 4,000 votes (Orient le Jour 2013b).

three decades, whatever last whiffs of legitimacy the GULW could claim were shattered when the rival UCC mobilized thousands of teachers and public sector workers in a month-long campaign to force the government to pass a salary scale increase.” (Ohrstrom 2013)

Today, the GUWL is facing significant problems. Its funding is now completely tied to the discretion of the Labour Ministry, which places considerable constraint on activity as the federation does not receive dues from its membership (Wehbe M. 2012 and Anonym 2012b). The federation’s leadership has resisted any reform in the structure of the GUWL, which is still organized through a federal structure that gives the same representation to a federation of more than 8,000 members (such as the Federation of Bank Employees) and a federation composed of 42 members (such as Federation of the Trade Unions of Mount Lebanon) (Bedran and Zbeeb 2000). The large growth in these small federations is indicated by the fact that the GULW now consists of 52 federations and 640 unions, up from 22 federations and 62 unions in 1992 – concurrent with a significant reduction in the proportion of workers covered by the federation (now standing at between 4-7 percent of the country’s work force) (Bou Habib 2012; Abdallah 2012; Sleibe 2012). This structure has entrenched the control of the March 8 forces over the GULW, which now represent more than half of its component federations (Dirani 2012). Moreover, the leadership of the GULW, notably its President Ghassan Ghosn, has been accused of corruption (Wehbe M. 2012). According to Ali Taher Yassin, the GULW’s Council of Delegates (Majlis al-Mandubîn), which is in charge of verifying the federation’s accounts, has not met since 2001 (Yassin 2012).²⁰¹

The decline of the GULW is further reflected in the increasing public opposition to the federation expressed by worker activists. In May 2012, a meeting called “The

²⁰¹ It should also be noted that the trade union movement as a whole has been largely unsuccessful in attempts to organize women workers, who suffer most from unemployment, low paid work and a bias towards the informal economy. Women represent half of the population in the country, but only 21 percent are economically active, (compared to a 73 percent rate for men). There are no women members in the executive committee of 184 trade unions, although the participation of women in unions has increased slightly, thanks partially to the establishment of the Unions Training Centre in 2001, which offers educational programmes and supports women’s participation in various activities (ILO 2008 Country Brief Advancing women’s employment in Lebanon).

Consultative union meeting for a democratic and independent trade union movement” was organised at the initiative of the Lebanese Center for trade union Training. Numerous federations opposed to the GULW participated in this meeting, including the Printing Press Workers’ Federation, National Federation of Workers, Federation Chemical Workers and the Federation of Construction and Timber workers (LORWE 2013b:15). The gathering expressed its support to the UCC and criticised the economic direction of the state. The most important outcome was the goal of building a democratic and independent trade union movement, autonomous from the decisions of political parties and the leadership of the GULW. In response to threats to its authority, the GULW leadership issued a statement in December 2012, accusing anyone establishing an independent trade union outside of the GULW of seeking to “atomize, dismember, and divide the trade unions and abandon the workers in order to serve the Zionist project calling for constructive chaos” (Zbeeb 2012d).

At a conference held in October 2013 to discuss the GULW’s record, many labour activists argued for the establishment of an independent, combative and democratic trade union movement, as an alternative to the current federation (Al-Hajj 2013). Charbel Nahas declared at the conference that “the GULW’s leadership are little more than agents of big business” and that “their role is tantamount to keeping a lid on the labour movement and signing off one concession after another” (Al-Hajj 2013). Ghassan Sleibe pointed out that the great majority of trade unionists in the GULW are linked to the sectarian political parties who pay their wages, adding that “these officials, in most cases, do not even belong to the sector they represent, thus severely limiting their ability to represent the rank and file” (Al-Hajj 2013). This growing opposition has also manifested in demonstrations held on May Day in 2012 and 2013 in front of the GULW’s headquarters, in protest against the federation’s policies. The slogan “The People Want to Overthrow the Confederation,” has been written several times on the walls of its headquarters, while graffiti campaigns by young activists on the streets of Beirut were organized for May Day in 2012 to express their rejection of the institution, which they see as a “traitor that does not represent the interests of workers, but those of the government” (Al-Kantar 2013).

6.7 Conclusion

Historically, the Lebanese labour movement has played a prominent role in encouraging cross-sectarian mobilisations in support of worker and other social struggles. This record extends back to the period of the Civil War – when the GULW organised demonstrations and strikes across the various areas of Beirut – and continued through the mobilisations against the neoliberal policies of Hariri and subsequent governments, whether led by March 8 or March 14 forces. These struggles have been viewed by all sections of Lebanon's elite as presenting a potentially serious challenge to the status quo, including the sectarian division of the political system. In response to the challenge posed by the labour movement, Lebanese governments have attempted to undermine the GULW through establishing rival sectarian-linked federations and trade unions as well as direct intervention in the affairs of the GULW itself. By the early 2000s, this process proved relatively successful.

Hezbollah, along with other political forces supported by the Syrian regime, has participated in this weakening of the labour movement. The party has formed separate, Shi'a-based federations and trade unions in agriculture, transport, construction, printing, press, health sector, cooperatives and electricity. This proliferation of federations and trade unions has enabled it to win significant power in the GULW, in which the majority of leadership seats are controlled by Amal and Hezbollah. Today, the GULW is unable and unwilling to mobilise workers despite the intensification of neoliberal policies over the recent period. As many of the interviews conducted for this thesis indicated, the GULW has instead become a vehicle for the political agenda of Hezbollah, Amal and the other smaller Syrian-allied parties (Bou Habib 2012; Dirani 2012; Gharib 2012; Sleibe 2012).

This shift in the composition of the GULW leadership has created a transformation in the discourse of the Lebanese labour movement – away from an orientation based on cross-sectarian mobilisation, towards one that identifies sectarian goals as paramount and projects a unanimity of interests of different class fractions within sectarian communities. In this sense, Hezbollah (and likewise Amal's) hegemonic

influence in the official structures of the labour movement corresponds to the changing class composition of the Shi'a community as a whole, and the palignment with the elites of the Sh'ia community. Concurrently, Hezbollah has utilised the same hegemonic apparatus identified in the previous chapter in an attempt to maintain its influence within the Shi'a population.

This record, in regards to social and workers struggles, appears to confirm the basic argument of this thesis: the party's interests are more aligned with those of the elites of the Shi'a community rather than workers or poorer populations. It is apparent that Hezbollah, much like the other political parties in Lebanon, acts in practice to prevent the emergence of a cross sectarian popular movement in Lebanon, which could raise deeper social and economic issues. The potential emergence of such a class dynamic could challenge the sectarian system and the position of the dominant political parties, including that of Hezbollah.

Chapter 7: Hezbollah's Military Apparatus

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 discussed the main aspects of the SA and the ISA of Hezbollah but did not tackle a major aspect of the party: its military and security apparatus. The most well known use of this apparatus has been its use in fighting the Israeli occupation and responding to Israeli military attacks. This armed resistance has brought much popularity to the party in Lebanon and the region, especially after the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000, and again after the 2006 war with Israel. Hezbollah continues to justify its weaponry by the need to liberate the tiny Lebanese territory of the Shebaa farms, still occupied by Israel, to protect Lebanon as a whole against Israel, and what it describes as ongoing external threats in the wake of the regional upheaval that started in 2011.

But Hezbollah's military capacities have not been used solely against Israel. Throughout its history, the organisation has also directed armed violence against rival political parties. This was particularly the case during the Lebanese Civil War, when Hezbollah sought to develop its control over Shi'a populated areas and to act as the main power instead of the state. More recently, such as in 2008, Hezbollah's arms have been directed again at other Lebanese political actors.

This chapter presents an overview of Hezbollah's military organisation and armed apparatus as a core feature of its repressive SA. The chapter begins by discussing the structure of Hezbollah's armed apparatus, focusing in particular on three main bodies: the Islamic Resistance, the Security Organ Unit, and the External Security Apparatus. The chapter then examines how this apparatus has developed in line with the resistance component of Hezbollah's worldview, particularly the confrontation with Israel. The third part of the chapter then turns to Hezbollah's use of its weapons against internal political rivalries, focusing in particular on the May 2008 events in Beirut. The final section looks at Hezbollah's recent involvement in Syria, and the ways this has acted to accentuate sectarianism within Lebanon itself.

Through this narrative, the chapter demonstrates that the role of Hezbollah's

repressive SA is essentially one of coercion in order to guarantee by force (physical or otherwise) political conditions that are suitable for the reproduction of the relations of production, which are ultimately relations of exploitation. The SA also allows by its repression, which can range from physical force to simple administrative orders and prohibitions, the political conditions for the exercise and the activity of the ISA (Althusser 1976). In this manner, it forms an essential component of the coercive aspect to Hezbollah's hegemony in Lebanese society.

7.2 Hezbollah Military Apparatus and Organisation

Hezbollah's military apparatus is governed by the Jihad Council (JC) (*al-Majlis al-Jihâdî*), which, according to various sources (Daher 2014:195; Blanford 2011:101), is presided over by Hassan Nasrallah. The Jihad Council is under the authority of the *Majlis Shura al-Qarâr*, which as Chapter 5 noted, wields all decision-making power and directs several subordinate functional councils. The *Majlis Shura al-Qarâr* views all elements of the group's activities, including its political and military wings, as part of one holistic entity (Qassem 2008:91). According to Hezbollah's top officials, this unity of purpose among the group's diverse activities is essential to its success. Qassem told a Lebanese newspaper in 2000 that "If the military wing were separated from the political wing, this would have repercussions, and it would reflect on the political scene", adding that "Hezbollah's Secretary General is the head of the Shura Council and also the head of the Jihad Council, and this means that we have one leadership, with one administration" (cited in Levitt 2013).

The Jihad Council nevertheless enjoys a strategic ambiguity according to American researcher Matthew Levitt. Levitt argues that neither the majority of Hezbollah officials nor the party's elected parliamentarians are aware of the details of their party's covert military activities, which are decided on by the most senior leadership of the party and of the Jihad Council (Levitt 2013).

The JC runs three different units called the Islamic Resistance, the Security Organ and the External Security Apparatus (ESA).

a) Islamic Resistance

The Islamic Resistance's historic role since its establishment has been the military confrontation with Israel. As was noted in Chapter 2, 1,500 Pasdaran established the Islamic Resistance in the summer of 1982, setting up training camps in the Syrian city of Zabadani and in the western Bekaa district (with Syria's authorisation) (Norton 1987:19). At this time, Abbas Al-Mussawi encouraged his students and followers to undergo military training in the camps located in the West Bekaa. According to Subhi Tufayli, more than 1,000 youths were trained during the summer of 1982, and clandestine groups were constituted and sent to the South where the first military operations of the party were launched against Israeli's occupation (cited in Daher 2014:80).

Today, the exact number of Hezbollah soldiers is difficult to estimate, but is believed to range from 5,000 (Daher 2014:295) to 7,500 full time soldiers with some 20,000 reservists (Nakhoul 2013). Hezbollah recruits usually follow a specific course of military training, which generally takes places in Iran in the various training camps run by the Qods Force of the IRGC and sometimes in Syria. Recruits into Hezbollah's Special Forces unit, the most elite element in the military organisation of the party, go through an intensive three month course divided into two forty-five day programmes with a five day break in between. The Special Forces cadres are full time soldiers who train continuously, while most Hezbollah combatants are part timers with daily jobs or college students (Blanford 2011:120-121).

While receiving formal orders from the leadership, the military apparatus of the Islamic movement is very autonomous in their implementation. To this end, Hezbollah has purposely reduced intermediaries between the top military leadership and local commanders on the ground (Berti and Gleis 2012:64-65). Naim Qassem (2008:98-100) has stated that once the green light for a military operation is given, the small command involved in its planning, execution and tactics handles all the decision-making.²⁰² In this manner, Hezbollah's command structure is less pyramid-

²⁰² For example, in an interview with the Lebanese Newspaper al-Akhbar, Hassan Nasrallah declared that the decision to capture the Israeli soldiers had been taken in Hezbollah's Shura Council months before the operation in July 2006 (Al-Amin, Ileik, Qanso, Zarakat 2014).

like and more horizontal in nature (Berti and Gleis 2012:65). Timur Goksel, the former spokesman of the United Nations monitoring force in South Lebanon, has confirmed this – noting that Hezbollah fighters “don't work in military hierarchies or military command levels. There is one leader in Beirut and all the other units in the field are autonomous, they know what they are doing [by themselves]. They don't need communications, they don't report everything, they don't ask for orders, they know what they are doing” (cited in Asia Times 2006).

b) Security Organ Unit

The Security Organ Unit is responsible for the security of the members of Hezbollah and its arms in Lebanon, notably through the surveillance of alleged collaborators (Daher 2014:195, Blanford 2011:428-432). It is in charge of Hezbollah's four territorial commands covering the south, Dahyeh, the Bekaa Valley and the Mediterranean coastline (Blanford 2011:346). In these regions, the Security Organ monitors the entry and activities of visitors, including journalists and photographers. As a result, there have been many cases of foreigners who have been stopped, questioned and occasionally followed by this unit (Blanford 2011:428-432).

The Security Organ Unit has been quite effective in the protection of Hezbollah members since the establishment of the Islamic movement. This was particularly visible during the 2006 war: not a single high-ranking cadre of Hezbollah was killed during the 33 days of war despite numerous attempts by the Israeli army, including the dropping of 22 tons of bombs on a bunker in Beirut allegedly used by senior members of Hezbollah (Democracy Now 2006). The Israeli army also failed twice to kidnap the *Sheikh* Muhammad Yazbeck in the city of Baalbek and its surroundings. Both times the Israeli elite commandos had erroneous information on the location of the *Sheikh* Yazbeck (Daher 2007:45).

The Security Organ Unit, with the cooperation of the ICRG, was recently responsible for the discovery of the most significant security breach in the party's history – a Mossad agent located in the leadership of Hezbollah Unit 910 (a unit that coordinates the group's foreign operations, see below). This double-agent, Muhammed

Shawraba, worked along with four other members of a Mossad team (Janoubia 2014). The Hezbollah security apparatus has detained and interrogated Muhammed Shawraba and his four colleagues since November 2014, after placing them under surveillance for six to seven months. Shawraba was tried for treason after he tipped off Israel about five operations to avenge the killing of Hezbollah's top military commander Imad Mughniyah, which led to their failure (The Daily Star 2014d). He allegedly also passed information to Israeli secret services that led to the 2008 assassination of high-ranking Hezbollah official Imad Mughniyah and the 2013 killing of Hassan Al-Laqqi (Middle East Eye 2014).²⁰³ This was not the first time that spies had penetrated the ranks of the party. In 2011, Hezbollah leader Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah acknowledged that at least two Hezbollah members had confessed to working for the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (The Daily Star 2014d).

The Security Organ Unit, despite its efficiency, has nevertheless not prevented the assassination of seven Hezbollah commanders by Israeli armed forces. The first was *Sheikh* Ragheb Harb, one of the founding fathers of Hezbollah, who was gunned down in the Nabatieh town of Jibchit in southern Lebanon in 1984 (The Daily Star 2013a). The last one was in December 2013: Hajj Hassan Al-Laqqis, who was according to Lebanese journalist Radwan Murtada the "head of Hezbollah's air defence division, and one of the resistance's most important 'electronic minds'" (Murtada 2013), and was killed outside his home in the southern suburbs of Beirut.

In addition to these functions directed against external threats, the Security Organ Unit is an important part of the repressive apparatus of Hezbollah within Lebanon itself, and has frequently been compared to a 'quasi-state apparatus' in the regions under Hezbollah's domination. This has been illustrated on numerous occasions where the Security Organ Unit has overruled the authority of Lebanese government institutions. In September 2010, for example, SUVs with tinted windows and no license plates, belonging to Hezbollah, entered the grounds of Lebanon's International airport to provide security to the former head of the General Security in

²⁰³ He is also said to have revealed Hezbollah members to the Israelis that led to the arrest of Muhammad Amadar in Peru this year and Hossam Yaacoub in Cyprus last year, as well as Daoud Farhat and Youssef Ayad – detained in April 2014 in Bangkok for allegedly planning attacks against tourists in Thailand (Middle East Eye 2014).

Lebanon, retired General Jamil Al-Sayyid (Khaddaj 2010b).²⁰⁴ He was greeted by Hezbollah's MPs and allies in the VIP lounge of the airport, in an attempt to prevent his arrest by security services. The Lebanese judiciary had earlier issued a memorandum to the Central Criminal Investigations Department to bring Al-Sayyid in for questioning as a defendant for the offence of threatening the Prime Minister of Lebanon Saad Hariri.²⁰⁵ Hezbollah, however, called on the judiciary to revoke the decision (Lynch 2010 and Khaddaj 2010b). Against the accusations of "violation of a public facility" and undermining the "authority of the state" following the airport incident, Hezbollah MP Nawaf Al-Mussawi responded that "the authority of the state is already violated," and added that "what happened, will happen every time we want it to happen" (cited in Khaddaj 2010b).

Hezbollah has further demonstrated its quasi state capacities through displaying its own security forces in Dahyeh and some other Shi'a populated regions in spring 2013 after they were the target of several planned explosions and attacks from jihadist groups. These groups justified their attacks as an act of retaliation for Hezbollah's involvement in Syria.²⁰⁶ In response, Hezbollah's soldiers implemented tight security measures and put up multiple check-points throughout Shi'a populated areas. Although these checkpoints were later taken over by Lebanese soldiers, Hezbollah continued to deploy security units and also deepened its coordination with the army.²⁰⁷ Through 2014, particularly around the Ashura religious events, Hezbollah again utilised its own security units to patrol and police Shi'a areas – further confirming its ability to take the place of the state in regions under its control.²⁰⁸ Indeed, regions under Hezbollah's influence were left out of the 2015

²⁰⁴ Al-Sayyid, was the director-general of Lebanon's General Security between 1998 and 2005. He was then imprisoned on suspicion of involvement in the 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and then later released due to lack of evidence.

²⁰⁵ On September 12 2010, Al-Sayyid said in a statement that Prime Minister Saad Hariri "should take a lie detector test to prove he did not support or fund false witnesses in the Special Tribunal for Lebanon" (Lynch 2010).

²⁰⁶ For example the Abdullah Azzam Brigades, a Jihadist group linked to al-Qaida, claimed responsibility for the attack against the Iranian Cultural Center in February 2014 in a posting on Twitter and said it would "continue to target Iran and its party in Lebanon" until Hezbollah forces are pulled out of Syria (Abu-Nasr and Shahine 2014).

²⁰⁷ The head of army intelligence in South Lebanon, General Ali Shahrour, organised a meeting with security officials in Hezbollah and Amal in the region to coordinate security measures for the Ashura's commemoration in November 2013 (Khalil 2013).

²⁰⁸ Dahyeh was nearly completely closed from the 1st to the 4th of November 2014 according to local residents, while in the cities of Hermel and Baalbek municipalities, controlled by Hezbollah, published statements asking their "Syrian brothers to stay in their homes and to not go out from Monday 3rd of November until the evening of

security plan of the Lebanese Interior Ministry, with the Minister stating that Dahyeh, South Lebanon and Bekaa, were part of Hezbollah's defensive framework and therefore no deployment of state security forces would take place (Orient le Jour 2015).

c) External Security Apparatus (ESA)

Finally there is the External Security Apparatus (ESA), which is the unit in charge of operations conducted by Hezbollah outside of Lebanon.²⁰⁹ The ESA was reportedly led by Imad Mughniyah until his assassination in February 2008 in Damascus. His successor is his brother in law Mustapha Bader El-Din, who has filled a series of military and security positions in the organisation (Terror Control 2014).

The best-known part of the ESA is Unit 1800, which is responsible for conducting operations in Israel and the Palestinian Occupied Territories (POT). Unit 1800 establishes contact and coordinates with Palestinian groups including Islamic Jihad, Hamas and others, in military operations against Israeli targets (Berti and Gleis 2012:65). The unit provides military training, expertise, and funding to Palestinian groups and has also recruited Palestinians to conduct operations directly under its control (Berti and Gleis 2012:65). The unit also supervises the creation of cells and networks in the POT and within Israel, trains Palestinians at camps in the Bekaa Valley, or sends them to Iran for advanced training (Blanford 2011:357).

Through this Unit, Hezbollah has reportedly assisted some Palestinian armed factions during the Second Palestinian Intifada (2000-2005), despite the fact that it prevented the launching of any military operation from Lebanon against Israel by anyone other than Hezbollah and its allies.²¹⁰ The Islamic movement also helped with

the day after (Orient le Jour 2014e).

²⁰⁹ The ESA is also known as the Islamic Jihad Organisation (IJO) (Levitt 2013).

²¹⁰ The only exception was the operation led by two members of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad organisation in March 2002, and assisted according to journalist N. Blanford (2011:310) by Hezbollah, which crossed the border from Lebanon to Israel and killed 5 Israelis. The actual attack was actually filmed from the Hezbollah post and broadcasted live on al-Manar TV (Blanford 2009). The IDF killed the two men, but decided to not retaliate against Lebanon. Otherwise, Hezbollah did not hesitate to chase and participate in the arrests by the Lebanese authority of members of small Palestinian factions from Lebanese refugee camps that fired several Katioucha rockets from South Lebanon in March and April 2002 (Harik 2004:189; Blanford 2011:313). Even today Hezbollah today controls the South and especially the areas close to the border and tries to prevent any action

the smuggling of arms and ammunition to the Gaza Strip by sea directly, or through tunnels dug under the Gaza-Egypt border. Technical data was also allegedly transferred to some Palestinian armed factions for bomb building techniques or rocket design (Blanford 2011:351).

Unit 1800 has also been involved in the countries surrounding Israel: Jordan and Egypt. In Egypt, a Hezbollah cell was discovered by the Egyptian security services. Muhammad Yusuf Ahmad Mansur, who served as an Egypt-based leader of a Hezbollah cell, and along with a number of his fellow operatives was arrested for planning to carry out terrorist operations against Israeli and other tourists in Egypt. In November 2009, Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah publicly acknowledged that Mansur was a Hezbollah member involved in transporting arms and equipment to Palestinian militants. In April 2010, an Egyptian court sentenced Mansur to 15 years for his involvement in the cell, which was subordinate to Hezbollah's Unit 1800. Muhammad Qabalan was the Lebanon-based leader of Unit 1800, and Mansur's superior, coordinating the Egyptian cell's activities from Lebanon. For his involvement, he was sentenced in absentia by the Egyptian court, to life imprisonment (U.S. Department of the Treasury 2013). In late January 2011 during the beginning of the Egyptian revolutionary process, the imprisoned members of the Hezbollah cell escaped and Mansur returned to Lebanon. In February 2011, Mansur appeared on Lebanese television with Hezbollah officials at a Hezbollah rally in Beirut (U.S. Department of the Treasury 2013).

Following the American and British military led invasion of Iraq in 2003, Hezbollah also established the Unit 3800, formerly known as Unit 2800, to support the training and operations of the Mahdi Army and other Shia political groups under the guidance of IRGC (Orléans 2014). These groups were mostly involved in combatting Western occupation forces and Iraqi Sunni-sectarian groups, but attacked Iraqi Sunni civilians as well (Blanford 2011:357; Deghanpisheh 2014b). Unit 3800 drew on expertise from Hezbollah's Unit 1800. According to a 2010 Pentagon report, Unit 3800 provided these Iraqi Shia sectarian militias with "the training, tactics and technology to conduct kidnappings [and] small unit tactical operations," and to "employ sophisticated

that is not under its domination.

improvise explosive devices (IEDs)” (cited on Orléans 2014). The individual in charge of Hezbollah's Iraq activities and relations with Iraqi political movements is the Lebanese cleric Muhammad Kawtharani, who is a member of Hezbollah's Political Council and was a former protégé of Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr (Rayburn 2014:18).²¹¹ According to some sources, Hezbollah's Unit 3800 commander Khalil Harb has also been spotted in Yemen in 2012 training Houthi rebels in Yemen and has been accused of facilitating the movement of large amounts of currency to them (Orléans 2014).

7.3 Hezbollah and Armed Resistance

As is clear from the above account, the formation and development of these parts of Hezbollah's armed apparatus have been closely connected to the organisation's resistance activities, particularly against Israel. The 1989 Ta'if Agreement legitimized Hezbollah's military wing as a resistance actor against Israel, and the organisation was not required to disarm, unlike all other factions. Hezbollah's attacks against Israel steadily increased following the Ta'if agreement reaching 644 operations against the Israeli armed forces and South Lebanese Army (SLA) in 1994 and 908 in 1995 (Blanford 2011:145).

In September 1997, a week after the death of Hadi Nasrallah (the 18 year old eldest son of the Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah alongside two other Hezbollah soldiers in a clash with the Israeli army), the Islamic movement announced that Hezbollah was forming a new resistance unit, the *Sarâya al-Muqâwama al-Lubnâniyya* or Lebanese Resistance Brigades (LRB). The LRB were open to all volunteers regardless of their religious sect (Blanford 2011:197). This new unit would be trained and guided by Hezbollah cadres. The Saraya launched their first attack against SLA outposts six months after their establishment (Blanford 2011:212).²¹²

²¹¹ Kawtharani was also the one to help secure the release from Iraqi custody of Hezbollah operative Ali Musa Daquq, a senior Hezbollah commander who worked closely with one of the Iraqi Shi'a armed groups called “Asâ'ib Ahl al-Haq ” and was responsible for numerous attacks against Coalition Force in Iraq (Blanford 2014a; Orléans 2014).

²¹² The LRB were also re-established in 2006, after having been disbanded following the liberation of the South of Lebanon from Israeli occupation in 2000, to serve different purposes such as including non Shi'a partisans in Hezbollah's “reservist resistance” to strengthen the impression of a national resistance rather than a uniquely Shi'a force and to train Hezbollah's political allies (Blanford 2011:436). The LRB nevertheless were not expected to play a role in any new military confrontation against Israel and would rather “look after the refugees

In the few months prior to the liberation of the South, Hezbollah was launching as many as 300 attacks against Israeli forces per month (Daher 2014:138-141). The ratio between the losses of Hezbollah and Israel had also declined considerably from the beginning of the 1990s, from ten to one, to nearly one to one at the end of 1990s (Daher 2014:132).

The South of Lebanon was finally freed from Israeli occupation in May 2000, following the withdrawal of the Israeli army. The number of Lebanese civilians dead in the numerous attacks by the Israeli forces and the SLA between the years 1982 and 2000 was around 23,500, in addition to 46,880 injured. Hezbollah, on its side, lost 1,276 fighters (Blanford 2011:281). During the same period, the Israeli army suffered the loss of 1,580 men, while 6,485 others were injured, and the SLA's total was 824 dead and 1,439 injured (Daher 2014:144).

Following the liberation of the South and the withdrawal of Israeli troops in May 2000 (excluding anti-aircraft firing along the border) the Shebaa Farms became the exclusive site of official Hezbollah activity. Hezbollah's military actions nevertheless took on a mostly defensive nature following the withdrawal of the Israeli army. Hezbollah's leadership had instructed its cadres in the South to automatically retaliate to breaches of the Blue Line, whether by ground, air or sea, including assassinations (Blanford 2011:281-283).

This largely passive role was to change, however, following Israeli's July 2006 invasion of the country. During the invasion, Hezbollah reported as many as 250 of its fighters were killed (Israel claimed 530). On its side, the Israeli army lost 120 soldiers and more than 40 civilians were killed, while between 300,000 and 500,000 persons from the North of Israel evacuated to the South during the Israeli war on Lebanon because of Hezbollah's rockets (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2006). The war itself reinforced the popularity of Hezbollah as a resistance actor particularly in the southern areas of the country that are heavily populated by Shi'a. These areas suffered the most from Israeli attacks, invasions and occupation, and Hezbollah's resistance enabled it to widen its social base in the Shi'a population even

from the South" according to a Hezbollah soldier (cited in Blanford 2011:439).

among those that did not adhere to its religious perspective. In a survey taken about 10 days after the Israeli war against Lebanon in 2006, more than 85 percent of Lebanese citizens supported Hezbollah's resistance (cited in Daher 2014:432).

One month after the end of the War, on September 22, Hezbollah celebrated "*Al-Nasr al-ilâhî*" (The Divine Victory) in the middle of Dahyeh and which gathered hundreds of thousands of people. Hassan Nasrallah declared that it was a strategic, historic and divine victory that had left Israel's image in tatters: "We have done away with the invincible army. We have also [done] away with the invincible state". He also added that Hezbollah's resistance and steadfastness dealt a severe blow to the New Middle East plan, and that the party had more than 20,000 rockets (Al-Ahed News 2006). The slogan *Al-Nasr al-ilâhî*" was later on reformulated in "*Nasr(un) min Allâh*" (A Victory from God) in the party's propaganda in order to instrumentalize this slogan with the family name of Hassan Nasrallah as part of the leader's image in the campaigns of communications of Hezbollah.

Following the 2006 War, the Israel-Lebanon border witnessed only a few security incidents, most of which occurred between 2013 and 2014, after the outbreak of the Syrian uprising. Hezbollah retaliated militarily to the multiple Israeli incursions in Lebanon. The Islamic movement was attempting to convey a clear message to Israel: despite its involvement in Syria and elsewhere, as we will see later in text, it was ready to answer any kind of aggression by the Israeli military. According to the Lebanese journalist Ali Hashem, Hezbollah's main concern was to enhance the deterrence against Israel, especially the southern border, and that "Israel should not try to take advantage of Hezbollah's involvement in Syria to try to impose new rules of the game" (Hashem 2014).

Hassan Nasrallah's speech for Ashura in November 2014 confirmed this situation by declaring that Israel should fear Hezbollah's rockets in the future because "they could reach every part of the Land of Occupied Palestine" (As-Safir 2014). He added that Hezbollah was never distracted from guarding Lebanon's southern border, contrary to Lebanese and Arab media claims that the Syrian conflict had exhausted the party's capabilities (As-Safir 2014; Khraiche 2014).

7.4 The Arms of the Resistance Against Rival Lebanese Actors

The successes of Hezbollah on the military field against Israel should nevertheless not be interpreted as implying that its arms were directed solely toward the “Zionist enemy”. Despite the fact that Hezbollah’s official historiography claims that the party adopted a defensive attitude towards other political movements during the Civil War, and its armed activities were solely concentrated on resistance to the Israeli occupation, the historical record indicates that Hezbollah has been willing to use its weapons against political opponents, including those on the left and other secular forces.²¹³

In September 1982, the LNRF (see Chapter 2), was the target of a wave of assassinations, particularly of its communist leaders in West Beirut. Despite the fact that the LNRF was formed to fight the Israeli occupation, Hezbollah criticized it for its secularism, which was called a product of “Maronite pluralism”, and because it did not call for an Islamic alternative to gain Lebanese independence from both the western and eastern spheres of influence (Charara 2007:347). Those assassinated included Khalil Naouss (journalist killed February 20, 1986) Suhail Tawile (February 24, 1986), Hussein Mroue (February 17, 1987), Mehdi Amel (May 18, 1987) Selim Yammout, and Professor Hikmat Al-Amin and others in a car bomb against the headquarters of the LCP in Rmeileh (Nassif Debs 2006; Nash 2008; Hajj Georgiou 2012). These assassinations helped create a climate of fear among LCP members in regions populated mostly by Shi’a, and to a lesser extent among SSNP members (Charara 2007:350-356).

Moreover, in November 1983, Hezbollah – with active Iranian IRGC assistance – on numerous occasions attacked the Lebanese state’s remaining presence in the Bekaa Valley, taking control of the *Sheikh* Abdallah barracks, which were the largest and best equipped. It actually became the headquarters of the Pasdaran (Chehabi 2006:221). The *Sheikh* Abdallah barracks were given back to the army in August

²¹³ Muhammad Raad, current head of the Hezbollah Deputy bloc in parliament: “We note that the resistance (Hezbollah) tried to affirm since the beginning its national character, of which the target was the Israeli occupation and not other Lebanese” (cited in Charara and Dromont 2004:120). The Lebanese author Walid Charara, who is considered close to Hezbollah, argued that “Hezbollah’s attitudes regarding different protagonists in the Civil War depended mainly on their stand towards Israel” (cited in Charara and Dromont 2004:120).

1992 (Daher 2014:128). Hezbollah also had numerous violent military conflicts with Amal throughout the middle and end of the 1980s. The most serious battle was in 1988 when both groups sought to establish their dominance in the southern suburbs of Beirut and in South Lebanon. The struggle ended with two negotiated settlements under the auspices of Iran and Syria in February 1989, in which Amal was excluded from the Bekaa and the suburbs of Beirut and the South was divided (Daher 2014:108-109). The military fights between Amal and Hezbollah in 1988 and 1989 caused 3,000 deaths, both civilian and fighters (International Center for Transitional Justice 2013). The reconciliation in 1990 allowed a refocus towards Hezbollah's military resistance in the South, which was undermined considerably by the military confrontation with Amal.

a) The May 2008 conflict

In May 2008, for the first time since the end of the Lebanese Civil War, Hezbollah used its weaponry against Lebanese national actors following threats by the March 14 alliance to politically attack key Hezbollah military interests. At that time, the Lebanese government, led by Siniora, passed two decrees aimed at weakening Hezbollah's military apparatus: first, on May 6 2008, the government reassigned the head of security at Beirut's airport, Wafiq Shuqayr, a general officer who was accused of being too close to Hezbollah and of having shared intelligence information with them.²¹⁴ Secondly the council of ministers challenged the legality and constitutionality of Hezbollah's independent telephone system, which the organisation claimed ensured the secrecy of internal communications and the efficiency of its command and control (ICG 2008:3). The telephone system was believed to have been a cornerstone of Hezbollah's military performance during the July 2006 war with Israel.²¹⁵ Hezbollah's telecommunication network, which existed since 1995, was never raised when Hezbollah was allied with the March 14 movement. This last decision was taken despite the fact that Hezbollah's Deputy Secretary Naim Qassem had warned on May 5 that Hezbollah would deal with those

²¹⁴ In particular, Shuqayr was accused of allowing Hezbollah to operate a system of listening devices and cameras it had set up to monitor runway 17, from where officials fly out and where they land. This directly affected the movement's control over a strategic location that is vital to the flow of people and probably to various types of trafficking (ICG 2008:3).

²¹⁵ The Winograd report in Israel highlighted the need to eliminate Hezbollah's command and control system in which telecommunication played a decisive role (ICG 2008:3).

who interfere with the network as if they were Israeli spies (cited in Blanford 2008b). Hassan Nasrallah promptly answered these decisions, describing them as a “declaration of war against the resistance and its weapons for the benefit of America and Israel” and added that “we will cut the hand that targets the weapons of the resistance” and “we will defend our weapons with our weapons” (Ladki 2008).

These decrees were taken in an atmosphere of heightened social tension, as was discussed earlier in the text. Despite the fact that there was an on-going general strike at the time, which Hezbollah officially supported, the organisation did not put its efforts behind the labour movement but instead launched a military offensive to repeal the decrees. On May 7, West Beirut was taken over by Hezbollah and its allies in a deliberate and well-planned operation. Hezbollah, with far superior equipment, training and discipline overwhelmed their rivals, the militias from the Future Movement, taking control of West Beirut in less than twelve hours. The Future Movement was forced to shut down its main media offices, which were looted or set ablaze. The various militant groups, including Hezbollah, were accused of having attacked civilians, destroying cars and shops and proffering anti-Sunni insults (ICG 2008:2).

Each position taken by Hezbollah on the Future Movement was directly handed over to the army, demonstrating once more the collaboration and coordination established in the previous years between the two actors. Moreover the conflict was not confined to Beirut, intense fighting occurred in the Druze areas of Mount Lebanon between Jumblatt loyalists on the one hand and Hezbollah militants or allied forces on the other (ICG 2008:7). In Tripoli, pitched battles opposed inhabitants of Bab El-Tebbane, a Future Movement dominated Sunni neighbourhood, and inhabitants of Baal Mohsen, populated mainly by Alawite who are close to a Hezbollah-led coalition of political parties gathered in the March 8 forces (ICG 2008:7).

The violence ended a week later with over 80 deaths and 250 wounded (Baliani 2008). Hezbollah had attained its objectives: the government cancelled its two decrees of May 6 and 7. Politically, the events led to the end of two years of paralysis on the Lebanese political scene with the Doha agreement. The agreement between the various Lebanese political forces led to the election of new President General

Michel Sleiman, the establishment of a national unity government, adopting the caza (smaller constituencies known as administrative units) as an electoral constituency in conformity with the 1960 law, whereby the cazas of Marjayoun-Hasbaya, Baalbek-Hermel and West Bekaa-Rachaya each remain as a single electoral constituency (Now Media 2008). The adoption of the electoral law based on the cazas actually ensured better Christian representation and was one of the main demands of Hezbollah's Christian ally the FPM.

Hezbollah's representatives continued to justify its military action in Beirut against the March 14 led movement. Hussein Al-Khalil, the political advisor of Hassan Nasrallah, declared in a press conference that Hezbollah's intervention was made in order to defend itself from the decision of the government, which was an American plan to disarm the resistance and submit it to Israel's will (Press TV 2008). In addition to this, Hezbollah member Ghaleb Abou Zeinab (2008) added that Hezbollah's military intervention did put an end to the Sunni Shi'a Fitna by avoiding any outburst. The Secretary General Nasrallah reiterated a similar discourse a few months later in an iftar in Nabatieh (Al-Ahed News 2008) and even in May 2012 (Al-Manar 2012b). But contrary to Hezbollah's claims, these events clearly intensified Sunni-Shi'a tensions. The most prominent Sunni religious authority, the Mufti of the Lebanese Republic, actually characterised Hezbollah as an occupying force, a clear reference to Israel's earlier occupation (ICG 2008:2).

Following May 2008, Hezbollah has continued to declare publicly that any actor threatening its armament and its soldiers would face the attacks of Hezbollah. In 2010, Hassan Nasrallah and other Hezbollah members²¹⁶ declared that the Islamic movement would "cut off the hand" of anyone who tries to arrest any of its members charged in the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) (Al-Ahed News 2010).²¹⁷ On January 18 2011, in another show of strength of the Islamic movement to impose its decisions, Hezbollah deployed unarmed militants in Beirut's streets as an attempt to warn March 14

²¹⁶ The Hezbollah Deputy Nawaf Mussawi declared on a similar note that he warned "conspirators" that "any hand that will try to attack the resistance will be cut or paralyzed" (Orient Le Jour 2010).

²¹⁷ In 2007, a Lebanese investigator, Wissam Eid, discovered evidence linking some ranking members of Hezbollah to the phones that were used by the team that carried out the assassination of Rafiq Hariri. Eid was killed several months later by a car bomb near his office. The indictments are widely believed to hinge on his work.

political forces of renominating Saad Hariri as Prime Minister. This was after Hezbollah and its allies of the March 8 forces toppled him on January 12 (Choufi 2013; ICG 2014:17). This show of force, called in Lebanon the “incident of the black shirts”, because Hezbollah members were dressed in black, led Walid Jumblatt, leader of the PSP, to temporarily abandon his alliance with Hariri’s Future Movement and join March 8 forces in electing Najib Miqati, who was Hezbollah’s candidate, as new Prime Minister (Choufi 2013; Mouqaled 2013).

These and other examples confirm Hezbollah’s on-going deployment of its weapons in internal Lebanese politics. Simultaneously, the evolution of Hezbollah from an anti-systemic party opposing the Lebanese state and promising the liberation of Palestine from the “Zionist enemy”, has been increasingly replaced by a more moderate propaganda arguing that its weaponry was solely to protect Lebanon and not for external purposes. In 2008, Dr Ali Fayyad, at the time head of the CCSD, said in regard to Palestine that “We (Hezbollah) support the Liberation of Palestine, but we do not want to take their place to free their lands. Hezbollah is firstly a Liberation national movement against the threats and the violence of Israel and to free the Lebanese territories and prisoners” (Fayyad 2008). Ghaleb Abou Zeinab said the same in affirming that “Our arms are for the liberation of Lebanese lands and the defence of the state and not for Palestine” (Abou Zeinab 2008).

This changed discourse – away from a resistance focus towards a pro-Lebanese state orientation – was especially strengthened since the beginning of the uprisings in Syria and Hezbollah’s increasing military involvement in the conflict. Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah acknowledged this evolution in a meeting in the beginning of 2013 with his cadres in a private gathering declaring that the party “had changed” and that the group’s ultimate priority is to “protect Lebanon” (Al-Akhbar English 2013a). He continued by saying that

“Hezbollah has changed and its priorities have changed based on circumstances... There was a time when we used to see Lebanon as a colonial construct that was part of the Ummah... That was in our early days, and the country was going through a Civil War. All parties were calling for a Nation

that fit their liking.... Today conditions have changed. We believe that this country is our country, and that the flag of the cedar is our flag that we need to protect, too. At this stage, our priority is to protect the state in Lebanon and to build it". (Al-Akhbar English 2013a)

7.5 The Military Intervention in Syria

Hezbollah was initially enthusiastic with regard to the uprisings in the region, but the key turning point in the Islamic movement's position towards the events of the region was definitely the beginning of the popular uprising in Syria and Hezbollah's increasing military intervention in the country.

Hezbollah has had a long relationship with the Syrian regime, which has increased through the years to become a strong alliance characterised by deep collaboration between the two actors, especially following the death of Hafez Al-Assad and his son Bashar's arrival to power. Hafez Al-Assad considered Hezbollah as a useful tool in strengthening relations with the IRI, at the same time exploiting them to extract concessions from Israel during peace negotiations. Under his rule, Syria regulated its support to Hezbollah according to the progress of the Middle East peace progress, tolerating more military operations by Hezbollah against Israeli forces in the South in low periods of the negotiation process to pressure Israel. This did not prevent clashes between the Syrian regime armed forces and Hezbollah during the Lebanese Civil War.²¹⁸

This situation changed with Bashar Al-Assad, especially following the withdrawal of Syrian armed forces of Lebanon in 2005 and the 33 Days War in 2006. The Assad regime increasingly viewed the relationship with the Islamic movement not as a tactical and temporal alliance like at the time of his father's rule but as a strong and strategic ally, and he deepened collaboration with the group politically and militarily.

In this manner, Hezbollah became a very important proxy for the Syrian regime in

²¹⁸ See page 80 (Repression of Syrian military forces in February 1987 of Hezbollah members in the Fathallah military barracks in Basta, West Beirut.)

Lebanon. Bashar Al-Assad held multiple meetings with Hezbollah's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, contrary to his father who saw him only twice (Blanford 2011:290). In addition to this, while Hafez Al-Assad had imposed controls on the quantity and variety of arms he allowed the IRI to transfer to Hezbollah via Damascus airport, Bashar opened the arms floodgate, including greater quantities of weapons and more advanced systems dispatched across the border into the Islamic movement's depot (Blanford 2011:337). Hezbollah supported the Syrian regime's hegemony in Lebanon until its departure in 2005, and even after Syria's departure it maintained close alliances with it. In Hezbollah's new manifesto of 2009, the Syrian regime was described as having recorded:

"a distinctive attitude and supported the resistance movements in the region, and stood beside us in the most difficult circumstances, and sought to unify Arab efforts to secure the interests of the region and challenges. Hence, we (Hezbollah) emphasize the need to adhere to the distinguished relations between Lebanon and Syria as a common political, security, and economic need, dictated by the interests of the two countries and two peoples, by the imperatives of geopolitics and the requirements for Lebanese stability and facing common challenges" (Manifesto 2009, section 5).

In a recent book, Dr. Hassan Fadlallah, a Hezbollah MP, wrote that Lebanon was completely controlled after the Ta'if Agreement by a small number of Syrian officials, with the collaboration of some Lebanese politicians. He accuses the Syrian officials at that time, especially Ghazi Kanaan and Abdel Halim Khaddam²¹⁹, to have worked for their personal interests at the expense of both Lebanon and Syria (cited in Bassam 2014). Despite disagreements regarding the internal Lebanese political scene, Fadlallah nevertheless explains that Syria and Hezbollah shared a central objective, being able to respond militarily to Israel, and that both Presidents Hafez and Bachar Al-Assad always assisted Hezbollah in its military confrontations with

²¹⁹ We should note that Hezbollah's criticisms are targeted to personalities of the Syrian regime that are no longer linked to it and who were put aside. Ghazi Kanaan died in September 2005 in unknown circumstances (the official version is that he committed suicide), while Abdel Halim Khaddam was sacked in the summer of 2005 and relocated to Paris to live in exile.

Israel (cited in Bassam 2014 and Nassif 2014). The Hezbollah MP puts particularly forward the role of the current President Bashar Al-Assad in supporting the military assistance to the Islamic Movement since the beginning of the nineties, for example in the Israeli military aggressions against Lebanon in 1993 and 1996 in which the Syrian regime supplied missiles to Hezbollah (cited in Bassam 2014 and Nassif 2014).

The eruption of the Syrian uprising in March 2011 and the increased military intervention of Hezbollah alongside the Assad regime showed that the relationship between the two actors had become a strategic one. In May 2011, during Hassan Nasrallah's first speech regarding the situation in Syria, he declared that the overthrow of the regime in Syria is in American and Israeli interests (Al-Muqâwama al-Islâmiyya 2011a). In August of the same year, he said at the occasion of the al-Quds International Day that “thanks [to] the Syrian leadership the Palestinian cause was preserved and not liquidated as it was the objective of all the US and western invasions and conspiracies against our region... Today some are seeking to break up Syria as part of a new Middle East agenda” (Al-Muqâwama al-Islâmiyya 2011b). In the beginning of the year 2012, Nasrallah increasingly accused the West, Israel and “moderate” Arab regimes of collaborating to overthrow the Assad regime:

“Isn't it weird that America, Europe, Israel, and the so called moderate Arab states – which assumes the responsibility for all the catastrophes which afflicted Palestine, the Ummah, Iraq, Iran and the peoples of the region for decades – and al-Qaida stands on their side as well, how? All of these forces are united by one objective and are determined to achieve one objective: to overthrow the regime.” (Al-Manar 2012a).

He reiterated this position a few months later much more sharply by saying that these same parties (the West, Israel and some regional states) want the downfall of the Assad regime, because it supported the resistance, and these parties are seeking to realise the project of the New Middle East of George W. Bush (Al-Manar 2012b). Nasrallah also accused the US and Israel on many occasions of using legitimate grievances in Syria as an excuse to destroy the country and the

resistance, in order to further Israel's control over the Middle East (Al-Akhbar English 2012b).

In May 2013, Hassan Nasrallah declared that:

“Syria has been the spine of the resistance, so the resistance can't stand still while that spine is being ruined... The US has brought in "al-Qaida" and the other Takfiris organisations from all over the world, paid them money, and offered them all the assistance they needed... Obviously, the Takfiris current is dominant among the Syrian opposition, and it is being funded and armed by a number of Arab and regional states... If Syria falls in the hands of the US, Israel, Takfiris, and US instruments in the region, then the resistance will be besieged, and "Israel" will invade Lebanon to impose its conditions and revive its project again. If Syria falls, then Palestine, the Palestinian resistance, Gaza, the West Bank, and the Holy al-Qods (Jerusalem) will be lost and the the people of our region will face a dark and cruel era!” (Al-Ahed News 2013)

In addition to this, Nasrallah claimed that Hezbollah's support to the Syrian regime was not only for Hezbollah and the Shi'a, but for Lebanon and all its various religious communities against the threats of *Takfiri* forces. (Al-Ahed News 2013)

In this context, Hezbollah has intervened militarily alongside the Syrian regime's armed forces. Accusations of Hezbollah's involvement in Syria were raised by opponents of the Assad regime since protests erupted in March 2011 (Ajbaili 2011), but many were hard to prove and to confirm because of a lack of any conclusive evidence.²²⁰ In October 2011, Nasrallah said in a television interview that accusations regarding the deployment of Hezbollah fighters into Syria were “absolutely untrue” (Blanford 2013). In May 2012, a senior Hezbollah official was also asserting that the

²²⁰ Since mid-2011, Hezbollah had been training thousands of Lebanese and Syrian youths in several combat camps. Leaked obituaries for fallen fighters whose families refused to remain silent mentioned that Hezbollah operatives had died “while on jihad duty” (Itani 2014).

Islamic movement did not and will not fight in Syria (ICG 2014:1). This however was contradicted by some journalists such as Nicholas Blanford, who wrote: “by early 2012, it was becoming public knowledge within Lebanese Shi’a circles that some Hezbollah fighters were being sent into Syria” (Blanford 2013). Hezbollah’s presence was confirmed with the first “martyrs” in Syria, as soon as June 2012 (Ashkar 2014b). Hezbollah announced the death of its soldiers while performing their “jihadist duties”, a standard phrase used by the group when announcing deaths of fighters in circumstances other than direct combat with Israel (Blanford 2012).

In the middle of 2012, Hezbollah was increasingly accused of providing technical and logistical support to Damascus and helping some of Syria’s Shi’a population to develop their own self-defence militias (ICG 2014:1; Orient Le Jour and AFP 2014b). Hezbollah also opened training camps in the area outside the city of Baalbek in the Bekaa Valley, close to the Syrian border, to train youth from various religious sects, although the highest percentage of the trainees in these camps are Shi’a, to develop similar self defence militias as in Syria (Al-Monitor 2014).

As reports of Hezbollah casualties mounted, especially after the death of Ali Nassif, a senior Hezbollah veteran commander near Qusayr in Syria in September 2012 whose funeral was attended by *Sheikh* Muhammad Yazbeck, it was becoming increasingly difficult to hide Hezbollah’s involvement in Syria. A few days after the death of Nassif, Hassan Nasrallah justified the death of several Hezbollah fighters in Syria by claiming that they were fighting on an individual basis to defend Lebanese villages in Syrian territories close to the border with Lebanon, rather than in Hezbollah-sponsored patterns (Itani 2014; ICG 2014:1). He added that he also did not rule out the possibility of Hezbollah joining the battle in the future inside Syria (Hersh 2013). By December 2012, videos allegedly portraying Hezbollah fighters in southern Damascus, home to a shrine revered by Shi’a, had emerged (Blanford 2013).

Hezbollah fighters were increasingly participating in the fights alongside the Syrian army. In the spring of 2013, Hezbollah actually played a key role in the military offensive launched by the regime on Qusayr controlled by the Syrian rebels at the time. The importance of the city of Qusayr was that it served as a logistical conduit

for the anti-Assad revolt facilitating the movement of weapons and militants between Lebanon and Homs (Blanford 2013b). Roughly 1,200 to 1,700 fighters of the Islamic Movement participated in the battle, and most of them were seasoned veterans drawn from Hezbollah's Special Forces (Blanford 2013b). Hezbollah supporters and sympathisers in Dahyeh celebrated the victory of Hezbollah and the Syrian regime forces against rebels in the district of Qusayr. Hezbollah members offered sweets in Dahyeh for the victory, which was adorned with flags of Hezbollah and banners saying "Qusayr fell" (Now Media and AFP 2013).

In November 2013, Hassan Nasrallah publicly acknowledged Hezbollah's presence in Syria and added that "the presence of Hezbollah fighters on Syrian soil aims at defending Lebanon, the Palestinian cause, and Syria, which defends the resistance" and "as long as there is a purpose for our presence there, we will remain there" (Al-Manar 2013a). In December 2013, he later claimed "We are protecting Lebanon... If Hezbollah did not fight in Syria, there would have been a Civil War in Lebanon and hundreds of car bombs. We did damage control and diminished the repercussions of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon" (Al-Manar 2013b).

Hezbollah's increasing military role in Syria took various forms ranging from veteran Hezbollah fighters commanding squads of Syrian soldiers, essentially acting as Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO), to the less experienced Syrian regular troops in street fighting in Homs (Blanford 2013b). They also took care of the training of some pro regime militias known as "popular committees" (Nakhoul 2013) and of some of the new recruits in the army (Orient Le Jour and AFP 2014b). In February 2014, Hezbollah sent a great number of its troops to the town of Yabroud, in the Qalamoun Mountains north of Damascus, while maintaining a presence in other regions of Syria such as the outskirts of Aleppo, Idlib, Deraa, Damascus and its suburbs (El-Hassan 2013; ICG 2014:2). Following new military victories by the Assad regime in April and May 2014, Hassan Nasrallah was confident enough to say that Syria's regime and the "axis of resistance" were no longer in danger of being toppled (Al-Akhbar English 2014a; Al-Ahed News 2014b).

Hezbollah's intervention in Syria was increasingly presented to its supporters and more largely to the Lebanese Shi'a population as an "existential battle" against the

Sunni extremists qualified as "takfiris" (Orient Le Jour and AFP 2014a). This feeling among the Shi'a population was particularly strengthened following the multiple attacks by jihadist groups²²¹ targeting Lebanese Shi'a populated areas and more particularly Dahyeh since 2013 (Al-Akhbar English 2013d). Estimates at end-2013 of Hezbollah fighters in Syria number between 3,000 and 4,000, including elite fighters, experts and reservists, at a time and rotating in and out of the country on thirty days deployments (Orient le Jour and AFP 2014b; Sullivan 2014).

According to some Hezbollah soldiers, the war in Syria has considerably strengthened the Islamic movement at the military level. One Hezbollah commander explained that the Islamic movement was now militarily stronger than ever before and had nearly become a real army. He added that Hezbollah's military involvement in Syria "has led to an uptick in recruiting, filling the group's ranks with a growing number of young fighters, and years of combat have created a new generation of battle-tested militants" (cited in George 2015).

7.6 Consequences of Hezbollah's Intervention in Syria: Rising Insecurity and Sectarianism

The increasing insecurity in the country and the numerous attacks against Shi'a populated areas was accompanied by intense and growing sectarianism. Despite the denial of Hezbollah's leadership, the involvement in Syria of the Islamic movement has increased the level of sectarianism and sectarian tensions between Sunni and Shi'a in Lebanon.

Several events in the last few years have radicalised the Sunni Lebanese population, strengthening especially Salafists and Sunni jihadists groups. This frustration spanned from the assassination of Rafiq Hariri in 2005, in which the Assad regime and then Hezbollah were accused of having a hand; the events of May 2008 mentioned earlier; the fall of the Lebanese National Unity government led by Lebanese Sunni leader Saad Hariri following the resignation of Hezbollah and its

²²¹ After the fall of the city of Yabroud in January and February 2014, in which Hezbollah played a leading role in the military fights against Syrian rebel fighters, a suicide bomb targeted Dahyeh claimed by Jabhat al-Nusra in Lebanon and the Liwa Ahrar al-Sunna. Both groups said they were avenging Yabroud. "Prepare for the transfer of the battle of Yabroud into Lebanese territory," warned the latter (Nashashibi 2014).

political allies from the cabinet over arguments stemming from a UN investigation into the assassination of Rafiq Hariri; the assassination in 2012 of Brigadier General Wissam Al-Hassan, chief of the Intelligence Bureau of the Lebanese Internal Security Forces (one of the two state Security agencies headed by Ashraf Rifi and considered as an ally of the Hariri Future movement and Saudi Arabia) (Saab 2012). Finally the involvement of Hezbollah in Syria has considerably worsened the Sunni and Shi'a sectarian tensions in the country.

At the same time, Hezbollah has increasingly used a religious and sectarian Shi'a discourse among its members to legitimize and justify its military intervention in Syria. Hassan Nasrallah, for example, said that Hezbollah needed to intervene in Syria not only to protect the resistance, but also to defend Shi'a villages by sending Hezbollah soldiers to the border. He also stressed Hezbollah's role in protecting Shi'a religious symbols like the mausoleum of the Prophet Muhammad's granddaughter, the Shrine of al-Sayyida Zaynab in Damascus that "has been already targeted many times by terrorist groups" (cited in Rida 2013). Sayyid Nasrallah added that this is a very sensitive issue, given the fact that certain extremist groups have announced that if they reach this shrine, they will destroy it. The shrine is located in the al-Sayyida Zaynab area in Damascus (Nashashibi 2014). Reports signalled that Hezbollah soldiers wore headbands with 'O Husayn' written on them (Blanford 2013b).

There has also been an increase in the display of banners, photos and songs glorifying Shi'a religious symbols in Shi'a neighbourhoods, which previously usually appeared only during the Ashura. Social media outlets teemed with videos and pages calling for the defence of religious shrines in Syria and praising young Shi'a who died in a jihad to protect them have also increased considerably (Blanford 2013b). In the Ashura celebrations of 2013, slogans such as "*Hal Min Nâsirîn Yansurunâ? Labbayki ya Zaynab!*" (Is there any supporter to stand up for us? we are all for you, Zeinab!), "Oh Zaynab! We are all your Abbass!" and "We swear by Hassan and Hussein, Zaynab will not be captured twice!" were raised to call for the defence of the Zaynab shrine that is protected by Hezbollah and other Shi'a sectarian groups from possible attacks of opposition armed groups in Damascus (Boumet Beirut 2013).

The growing insecurity in Shi'a populated areas since Hezbollah's military intervention in Syria, and the worsening of sectarianism in Lebanon and in the region, in addition to the multiplication of deaths within the Islamic movement on the battlefield in Syria, have provoked some sense of dissatisfaction among sections of Lebanese Shi'a and even in Hezbollah's popular bases. Vocal criticisms have remained very low and limited because of the control of Hezbollah over Shi'a populated areas. There are, nonetheless, some indications of growing discontent.

Following the death of a dozen Hezbollah fighters and over 20 injured in an ambush in Sayyida Zaynab outside Damascus in April of 2013, the mother of a dead fighter asked Hezbollah official *Sheikh* Muhammad Yazbeck, who was offering condolences to a family of one of the deceased, the reason why they were sending their children to Syria while their battle was with Israel (Now Media 2013). In another case, a delegation from the Baalbek region representing the families of fallen Hezbollah fighters met with Muhammad Yazbeck in June 2013 and told the organisation that they found Hezbollah's defence of the Syrian regime "flawed and intolerable," an act which, according to the delegation, did not fall within the group's *raison d'être*—resistance to Israel—and one that would widen the Sunni-Shi'a rift in Lebanon (Ya Libnan 2013a). Other persons such as journalist and critic of Hezbollah, Ali Amine, echoed similar feelings in the South of Lebanon (Nakhoul 2013).

In autumn of 2013, in the South, rare behind-the-scenes disgruntlement was increasing within the Hezbollah leadership, according to Hisham Jaber, a Shi'a and retired Lebanese army general. He said that some southern Shi'a families were questioning the wisdom of Hezbollah fighting fellow Muslims, even if they are Sunni (Dettmer 2013). In the summer of 2014, Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, made a rare public appearance in the Bekaa Valley, to greet families of fallen fighters and visit other Hezbollah soldiers. The visit was also partly intended to assuage frustration among Shi'a families who have lost family members in Hezbollah's military engagements (Naylor 2014).

The majority of the Shi'a population was nevertheless still very much supporting Hezbollah, despite some criticisms raised among sections of it. No alternative to Hezbollah has been provided by its critics, and many in the Shi'a population believed

that in the current situation the alternative to Hezbollah's strengthening is Shi'a weakening (ICG 2014:12).

7.7 Conclusion

Hezbollah's military and security apparatus has been a central and key feature of the Islamic movement since its establishment. This apparatus has served to oppose Israeli's occupation of the South until 2000, and then to create a situation of deterrence against Israel's attacks, especially during the 2006 war. Hezbollah's arms are justified until today for the purpose of liberating the Shebaa farms still occupied by Israel and to defend and to protect Lebanon as well, not only against Israel, but increasingly against the "takfiris threat" as put forward by Hezbollah's propaganda to legitimize its "pre-emptive war" in Syria (Al-Manar 2013b and ICG 2014:4). In addition to this military function, Hezbollah also has a large security apparatus aimed at guaranteeing and managing security in Shi'a populated areas. Hezbollah's security apparatus, as discussed in this chapter and chapter 5, takes care of controlling and even sometimes repressing any kind of dissent or opposition against the Islamic Movement.

Hezbollah's use of its arms has clear resemblance to the repressive SA, as described by Althusser. This is actually materialized through two main aspects. First, Hezbollah's security apparatus implements tight control over Shi'a populated areas, without hesitating to use security or repressive measures to prevent any opposition arising as a serious threat or alternative to the Lebanese Islamic movement. Secondly, Hezbollah's military apparatus intervenes outside of Lebanon and particularly in Syria to assist the Assad regime, which is an important political and military supporter of Hezbollah as the arms produced in Iran are transferred to Lebanon from Syria, to maintain its political and military power in Lebanon. In this manner, Hezbollah's military and security apparatus plays the role of the repressive SA in guaranteeing through repression, the political conditions for the activities and development of the ISA.

Hezbollah's armament is also perceived by large sections of the Shi'a popular and middle classes as a form of compensation for historic, political and economic

deprivation and a critical instrument of communal leverage in the Lebanese sectarian political system (Gambill 2007:42). Accordingly, as argued by Saad Ghorayeb (2005), “any plan that seeks to disarm the resistance will be construed as a form of communal disempowerment” for the Shi’a and strongly opposed. This feeling was only strengthened with the rise of jihadist forces in the region these past few years. Hezbollah’s military and security apparatus has been a key and central element in the development of the party. Its purpose today is clearly to guarantee its political domination and oppose any threats that would curtail its political interests, while maintaining a form of status quo of the sectarian political and economic system of Lebanon.

Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated and analysed the characteristics and evolution of Hezbollah in relation to the economic and political developments in Lebanese society and in the regional arena. It has shown that Hezbollah, and Islamic political parties more generally, can be analysed with the same theoretical and conceptual tools used to examine other movements in different regions of the world. The thesis has analysed Hezbollah in its totality and in its relation with capitalism, its policies and relations regarding the sectarian Lebanese political system, the state, revolutionary processes in the region, workers struggles, economics and women's rights. This is where the thesis differs from other studies, which very often focus on one or two aspects of Hezbollah's identity, typically the military side, while isolating the party from the political and social dynamics of the society and the policies of the party.

In this regard, the political economic dynamics of Lebanon and the region have had profound consequences for the development and nature of Hezbollah. The historical and enduring context for this development is an economy dominated by the service sector, in which trade, finance and tourism have taken a leading position, and inflows of foreign capital have long played a central role. Hezbollah's growing influence in the economy and Lebanese politics began with its control of the southern suburbs in 1989, home to 500,000 Shi'a, of which more than 70 percent vote in South Lebanon and in the Bekaa. The control of these areas has been an important route to power at the national level. The southern suburbs lacked basic and necessary services for a population in need, which presented great economic potential for the actor controlling this space. Hezbollah allied itself with the growing and ascending Shi'a petit bourgeoisie, using it as a base for recruitment and fundraising, and in the process making this class a patron of the new society forming in the suburbs. Its huge network of organisations helped the Islamic movement consolidate its growing influence and control over large portions of the Shi'a population, which gained increasing importance in the socio-economic and political structure of Lebanon. Shi'a majority populated regions in Lebanon attracted investments from both public and private actors, while a new and growing Shi'a fraction of the bourgeoisie was developing. The large inflow of money to Hezbollah after the 2006 war against

Lebanon by Israel only increased the importance of Hezbollah as a large economic actor in the country. Hezbollah is known to have purchased large portions of lands in South Lebanon and in Beirut, which made the party increasingly connected to important land owners and the continuous fast growing Shi'a fraction of the bourgeoisie, mainly concentrated in the construction and trade sectors of the economy.

Over time, these socio-economic and political changes have had important consequences on the party and its policies. Hezbollah has witnessed the growing significance inside the party of new higher middle class cadres involved in liberal professions, and lessening of radical and smaller petit bourgeois elements such as the clerics. At the same time, a new fraction of the bourgeoisie linked to the party through Iranian capital and investments was created, while the rest of the Shi'a fraction of the bourgeoisie, whether in Lebanon or in the diaspora, came increasingly under the umbrella of Hezbollah – or at least close to the party because of its political and financial powers. Alongside this increasing economic weight and integration into the political system, Hezbollah has also been linked to corruption and growing clientelist practices.

The economic and political importance of Hezbollah in Lebanon has made the organisation an increasingly significant rival to the fraction of the Lebanese bourgeoisie gathered around Hariri and March 14 (linked, in turn, to Gulf capital), particularly after Syria's withdrawal in 2005. The political opposition of Hezbollah to March 14 forces, which are backed by Western states and Gulf monarchies, should be understood as inter-capitalist rivalry on the national scale of two forces linked to different regional forces. Despite these rivalries, however, these two inter-capitalist blocs have cooperated with one another at points of crisis – indicated by their similar attitudes towards labour and other social movements, their orientation towards neoliberal reform in Lebanon, and their cooperation in government following the departure of the Syrian army of Lebanon in 2005.

The Sectarian State

Beyond these external features, there has been a subordination of initial political objectives affecting the ideology of Hezbollah. The organisation's initial radical opposition to the Lebanese sectarian political system has been downplayed following its entry into parliament and participation in the political system along sectarian lines, regardless of its continued rhetoric and populist criticism.

Hezbollah's initial objective was to establish an Islamic regime, despite the near impossibility of such a task given the multi-confessional reality of Lebanese society. From total refusal of involvement in the sectarian system, the organisation has been progressively integrated into the system as one of its main actors. Hezbollah's evolution was linked to various factors, including the change of political leadership in the IRI that sought a more pragmatic policy and improved relations with the Western and Gulf states; the development of Hezbollah as a mass party that was no longer primarily composed of young radical clerics and individuals who sought to impose a model similar to Iran; and, finally, Hezbollah's need to protect its armaments and its growing political and economic interests in the country. The popular base of Hezbollah, which increasingly included the growing Shi'a fraction of the bourgeoisie and middle classes, especially in Beirut, did not necessarily yearn to live in an Islamic Republic such as the Iranian model and was satisfied with a return to peace and an improvement in terms of political representation. These developments reflected the new political and economic importance of the Shi'a population in the country, achieved after the Ta'if agreement. A further important feature in this integration into the political system was the withdrawal of the Syrian army from Lebanon, which compelled the party to participate in all Lebanese governments from that point onwards.

In light of these developments, Hezbollah does not constitute in any way a challenge to the Lebanese sectarian system. On the contrary, it sees this system much like any other sectarian political party – as a means to protect its own interests. This is particularly important given the various social and political forces that attempt to unify Lebanese popular classes beyond sectarian identities. Hezbollah has sought to

reach agreements and to cooperate with the rest of the Lebanese elites in this regard, despite some political differences, especially during periods of heightened social mobilisation.

This “participatory” solution toward the confessional state taken by Hezbollah, reflects both an attempt to moderate the structural contradictions of Lebanese capitalism (Amel 1986:337-338) as well as the rivalries that exist within the bourgeoisie between its hegemonic and non-hegemonic fractions. The latter, as Mehdi Amel has noted, reflects:

“the consciousness of non hegemonic layers of the bourgeoisie in their (legitimate?) aspiration to occupy hegemonic positions occupied by other fractions, or to rise to their level by identifying where possible with them in the political and economic domain. This non hegemonic layer of the bourgeoisie wants the end of the hegemonic fraction without removing the domination of the bourgeois class.” (Amel 1986:339)

This evolution was also linked to Hezbollah’s regional allies, Syria and Iran, which both wanted an integration of the party into the Lebanese political scene after the end of the Civil War. At the same time, Hezbollah’s armed apparatus was subordinated to its political interests embodied in particular in the on-going stability of Lebanon. This led to increased collaboration with the Lebanese army and security services to prevent military conflict in the South of Lebanon with Israel, to collaborate against selfalist and jihadist groups, and finally to guarantee the security of some Shi’a populated areas. This does not mean that Hezbollah’s military component did and does not play a role against Israel’s aggressions and wars, but that Hezbollah’s armament was increasingly being used for other purposes, especially after the 2006 war.

Confirmation of this can be seen in the transformation of Hezbollah’s orientation towards the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa. Initially, in early 2011, Hezbollah stated that the uprisings in the region were part of the “project of

resistance” and opposed the USA and its allies in the region (Orient Le Jour 2011a), while Hassan Nasrallah condemned the accusations and conspiracy explanations that claimed that the USA were behind these revolutions (Al-Manar 2011). By 2013, the Lebanese Communication Group (LCG), (Hezbollah’s media arm) officially offered the Bahraini regime an apology for its coverage of the nearly three-year Bahraini uprising²²² and Hezbollah was fully entrenched in supporting the Assad regime in Syria. In addition to this, in the beginning of 2015, Hassan Nasrallah welcomed the return of Egypt’s role in Arab and regional arenas under the rule of the former head of Egypt’s armed forces and current President Abdul Fattah Al-Sisi, asserting the importance of Egypt as a key regional anchor of stability (Al-Mayadeen 2015).

We can see that the material reality and conditions in which Hezbollah is located helps to explain its behaviour and policies. This is a very different approach than those who argue that this is just a normal transition towards pragmatism experienced by all radical parties. Yesterday’s radical rhetoric of the Islamic movement came from an emerging petit bourgeois leadership that constituted the party’s leadership at the time of their origin in the 1980s; while today, political and economic power of the party and the large upper middle class leadership and cadres tend towards other interests and policies. This has an intertwined dynamic that involves both national and regional levels.

²²² The LCG offered this apology at the annual conference of the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU) and promised to be more objective and to seek to maintain professional standards, promising to carry out regular evaluations of its editorial policies to ensure its compliance with international agreements. This was in return for allowing the Lebanese media group to continue to broadcast in the island kingdom (Al-Hakim, Baltayeb and Dirani 2013). The Arabic-language news station, al-Alam, linked to the IRI, had also at this period substantially reduced its previously intensive coverage of Bahrain (Al-Hakim, Baltayeb and Dirani 2013). After the apology of LCG was publicly known, Hezbollah nevertheless issued a clarification saying that the party leadership was not consulted by the LCG delegation in the meeting in Tunis, and that the decision to issue an apology was made by them alone (Al-Hakim, Baltayeb and Dirani 2013). At the same time Hezbollah reiterated its support for the struggle of the Bahraini people. The al-Manar’s Managing Director Abdallah Kassir, ex Hezbollah MP, resigned from his post a few weeks later and has left the country for Iran (Ya Libnan 2013b). This could be a mere confusion inside Hezbollah’s organisation, although decision making is usually very well planned and discipline in the party is strong. This episode occurred at the same period that a rapprochement was happening between Qatar and Hezbollah, which was confirmed by Hassan Nasrallah in a speech televised in December 2013. He declared that he had met with a Qatari delegation (Al-Manar 2013b). In addition, a meeting was held between *Sheikh* Naim Qassem and the new Qatari ambassador in Lebanon a few weeks later. Both parties stressed in a joint statement that political solutions in the region were the basis to constructively resolve issues for the interest of the people and they also affirmed that cooperation among parties in Lebanon is the remedy that serves this country and all its citizens (Orient Le Jour 2013e).

Ideology

Hezbollah believes in the unity of the community and cooperation between classes, as Khomeini used to argue, where the workers should not ask more than what is given by the bourgeoisie and where the bourgeoisie has an obligation to be charitable towards the poor. Class struggle is seen as negative because it fragments the community or the Ummah. The Islamisation of large sections of the Shi'a population followed this objective in order to splinter and weaken solidarities between the different sects in Lebanon, whereas the Shi'a before the Lebanese Civil War were the largest section of nationalist and progressive parties that were leading social struggles. Sectarianism has always been a tool of the sectarian bourgeoisie in Lebanon to prevent any cross sectarian mobilisation, and Hezbollah is no exception to that.

Hezbollah's poor record towards mobilisations around social and worker's issues reflected the party's changing class interests and its opposition towards greater empowerment of the popular classes. The possibility of cross sectarian mobilization and the development of class-based movements present a potential threat to all the sectarian and ruling class parties in Lebanon, of which Hezbollah has become part. This is why Hezbollah has never mobilized its constituency on purely socio-economic demands within a cross sectarian perspective, although rhetorically supporting the GUWL and/or social demands.

Social and economic deterioration of Lebanese society was always subordinated to the recognition of the legitimacy of Hezbollah's armed capacities, and this is why Hezbollah has called on Saad Hariri – on numerous occasions – to seek joint collaboration and participation in a government based on the agreements the party had with his father, Rafiq Hariri.²²³ They understood this in the following way: Hezbollah takes care of the “resistance” against Israel and Hariri takes care of the economic and social policies of the country, each one not interfering in the affairs of

²²³ According to journalist Blanford (2011:360-361), Hariri and Nasrallah met secretly numerous times from mid 2004 until the assassination of Hariri in February 2005. In one of these meetings, Hariri assured Nasrallah would not seek to disarm Hezbollah by force. Dr. Hassan Fadlallah (2014 cited in Bassam 2014 and Nassif 2014) wrote in his recent book that Rafiq Hariri accepted before his death to maintain Hezbollah's military and organisational strength until the achievement of a settlement with Israel.

the other (Al-Muntada al-Ishtirâkî 2012a:4-8).

Hezbollah, as we have seen, despite rhetorical and populist criticisms against what it called “savage capitalism”, did not develop any alternative. On the contrary, it continues to support capitalism, free markets and neoliberal policies. Hezbollah’s presence in the government has only confirmed the previous policies of earlier Lebanese governments. In this manner, Hezbollah has become an integral part of the Lebanese bourgeoisie, where rivalries exist but are overcome in the face of any popular revolts or mobilizations that threatens the established system of power.

Regarding women, Hezbollah has promoted a conservative vision that confers the domination of men over women and attributes specific roles to women in society, the first and most important being the role of ‘motherhood’ in order to educate future generations with Islamic principles. Women in the Lebanese Islamic movement are not present in decision-making structures. In no way are patriarchal structures of the society challenged by the party, while women’s clothing and body must conform to particular norms that are said to preserve her honour and that of the family. The Islamic model is the only right path for women, otherwise they are considered to be somehow alien to their own society and under the influence of western cultural imperialism. As Hanieh has noted: “conservative structures on the role of women are an integral component of broader counterrevolutionary goals” (Hanieh 2013:172).

Finally, this thesis has demonstrated that Hezbollah’s claim to express solidarity with the oppressed of the world is largely based on Hezbollah’s political interests, which are themselves closely linked to Iran and Syria. This is why Hezbollah’s military confrontation with Israel, which as we have seen in previous chapters has been at the core of its identity, has been subordinated to the political interests of the party and its regional allies. The armament of Hezbollah has been increasingly oriented towards objectives other than the military fight against Israel according to contexts and times, including military attacks on other political parties inside Lebanon or the prevention of any resistance actor other than Hezbollah in South Lebanon. The defence of the “axis of resistance” and of the armed apparatus of the party have been used by Hezbollah as a propaganda tool to explain the policies and actions of

the party, the last example being its military intervention in Syria under the pretext of defending the “resistance”.

Counter society? Features of Hezbollah’s Hegemonic Project

These elements lead us to affirm that Hezbollah is not building a counter-society or a counter hegemonic project per se as suggested by some, but more or less trying to Islamise the largest section possible of the Shi’a population, while not presenting a threat in any ways to the dominant political system in its own society or even at a larger level.

In this regard, Hezbollah has pursued islamisation policies in Shi’a populated regions through multiple ways, including investments in businesses promoting the *Hâla islâmiyya*, social pressure through committees checking the conformity of institutions with the principles of the *Hâla islâmiyya*, as well as the use of its arms. The provision of social services through its huge networks of organisations has been instrumental in the spreading of Islamic principles among the wider population. Hezbollah, when it holds positions of power in ministries or in municipalities, acts to privilege actors close to their ideology, while reinforcing the exclusion of actors not sharing or in opposition to their political vision. In addition to this, Hezbollah’s armament has played an important role to diffuse the political thoughts of the party, especially in its military conflict against Israel, which brought huge popularity to the Islamic movement. At the same time its armament also serves other purposes such as defending the Islamic movement against any attempts to weaken it, including from internal Lebanese actors, as repressing forms of dissent within the Shi’a population, and plays the role of the “police” and the “army” to guarantee security in some Shi’a populated areas. As Chapter 5 and 7 discussed, Hezbollah’s apparatus and institutions displays very similar attributes to that of a state, and that through the combination of the ISA and the repressive SA, it is able to maintain its hegemony.

Hezbollah has indeed been successful, as we have seen, in reaching a form of hegemony among the Shi’a population. This hegemony has involved the development of a two-fold nature of class domination, in which, according to

Gramsci, the party both “leads the allied classes, and dominates over adverse classes” (cited in Thomas 2009:163). In this manner, hegemony represents:

“the form of political power exercised over those classes in close proximity to the leading group, while domination is exerted over those opposing it. Consent is one of the means of forging the composite body of a class alliance, while coercion is developed against the excluded other”. (Thomas 2009:163)

Consent and coercion, in other words, operate together in a dialectical fashion. As Thomas has noted:

“they counterbalance each other in a unity that depends upon the maintenance of a precise, unbalanced equilibrium between its two poles: forces must not appear to predominate too much over consent, but the proper relationship between in reality involves more weight on the side of the former”. (Thomas 2009:165)

Hezbollah has indeed been able to gain the consent of the popular classes through the mechanism of Islamisation and by the domination of the military confrontation against Israel, which acted to bind the interests of subaltern classes to the party structure and its interests, while it benefited and relied upon the continuing demobilisation of the proletarian forces. Islamisation of the Shi’a population has been the mechanism to control and gain consent among the Shi’a population, while continuing a process of elimination of groups and individuals not sharing the Islamic milieu and culture spread by Hezbollah.

In addition, as explained by Bob Jessop, “an hegemonic project can be concerned with various non economic objectives (even if economically conditioned and economically relevant)” (1990 cited in Roccu 2012: 208),²²⁴ in Hezbollah’s case these

²²⁴ Roberto Roccu adds, in relation to Jessop’s explanation: that “each accumulation strategy can be related to several alternative hegemonic projects, and on the other hand the success of the latter is dependant on their

non-economic objectives have been shown to be Islamisation and domination over the military confrontation with Israel. However, Hezbollah ultimately advances the long-term interests of the hegemonic class, which are not the interests of the popular classes but rather the rising petit bourgeoisie and increasingly through the years the Shi'a fraction of the bourgeoisie.

In this regard, Islamisation and resistance were two core components of the ideology that allowed Hezbollah to mystify the nature of its hegemonic project. They formed, therefore, a mean to build a manufactured consent; passive and indirect rather than active and direct. As Gerratna argues:

“a class that manages to lead, and not only to dominate, in a society based economically on class exploitation, and in which the continuance of such exploitation is desired, is constrained to use forms of hegemony that obscure this situation and mystify this exploitation; it therefore needs form of hegemony designed to give rise to manipulated consent, a consent of subaltern allies” (Gerratana 1997 cited in Thomas 2009:227).

In this manner, Hezbollah's ideology, in which mechanisms of Islamisation are predominant, is a “non organic” philosophy; one that has “maintained the subaltern classes in their subaltern position, glossing over or obscuring the true, fractured nature of the present by speculatively sanctifying it as the only possible present and this as eternity” (Thomas 2009:209). This summation accurately describes the ways in which Hezbollah's ideology attempts to reconcile contradictory and opposing interests.

Alternative Paths

The initial point of departure of this thesis was that Hezbollah and Islamic movements in general are neither revolutionary or progressive groups, nor terrorist groups, but

ability to relate to an existing or prospective accumulation strategy” (Roccu 2012:72). This is consistent with Gramsci's conception of hegemony, which “must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity” (cited in Roccu 2012:212).

parties led by political interests and power that can be explained through a materialist approach, and not simply a focus on ideology. In a Marxist sense, these parties can be identified as parties pulled in two directions – towards radical rebellion against existing society and towards compromise with it- increasingly widening its base and support within the bourgeoisie in regard to their political leaderships and cadres, while keeping a cross-class base of support. We have seen throughout the text that Hezbollah has evolved from radical rebellion towards compromise and participation within its existing political structures. This project does not present a fundamental alternative to the dominant capitalist and sectarian system in Lebanon. On the contrary, it sustains it, as it does with the system of sectarianism, discrimination against women, Palestinian refugees, and so forth. In addition, the provision of services by its networks of organisations does not differ from other political and sectarian communities in Lebanon, except in its size and efficiency, by promoting private, sectarian and patronal support or management of social risks (Catusse and Alagha 2008:132-134). As this thesis has shown, the elites of Hezbollah have to deal with the important bourgeois families, tribes and clans in different areas and act as patrons dealing with clients and favouring their own networks. The best example of this latter case is with Muhammad Al-Khansa Hezbollah, Mayor of Ghobeyri. The party, in many aspects, only strengthens the prevalent principles of the Lebanese society, those of a social solidarity based on primordial or primary identities (family, sect and sectarian political party) rather than social rights (Le Thomas 2012a:145).

As Achcar (2013b:35) argues, it is very misleading to consider Islam only as a “flag and mask” or merely as a language, as this overlooks the significant limitations placed upon the radicalising potential of these organisations' membership, and even their mass following, by their adherence to Islamic fundamentalist doctrines. Indeed, the weakness of Orientalist approaches that view religion as the main tool to analyse these parties and as the driving force of history in this region, is that they leave out the reality of socio-economic and political dynamics. Following Nilsen's call for “a theory of social movement that is truly relevant to the needs and knowledge of activist that seek to contribute to what Marx referred to as 'the self clarification... of the struggles and wishes of the age'” (Nilsen 2013:183), this thesis has sought to show the nature and development of Hezbollah, while trying to understand the behaviours and dynamics within and around the Lebanese Islamic party and the

wider society.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to outline a full alternative to Hezbollah's political programme or socio-economic practices. Suffice to say that the analysis above suggests that a truly counter-hegemonic project requires a rupture with the sectarian system, a full accounting of the class and social differentiation within Lebanon itself, and a nuanced appreciation of the regional dynamics as they intersect within Lebanon. Important moments in Lebanese history – notably the labour struggles of the Civil War period, and more recent experiences such as the formation of the UCC – point towards the possibilities and promise of a non-sectarian approach finding real roots in the country. In contrast, Hezbollah does not provide a vision of modernity in rupture with neoliberal capitalism or the Lebanese sectarian political system. In a region witnessing popular uprisings and intense and rapid political changes, Hezbollah's contradiction between its proclaimed support of the "oppressed of the world", on one hand, and its orientation towards Lebanese neoliberalism and the country's elite class, on the other, will likely prove increasingly problematic for the leadership of the Lebanese Islamic movement.

Annex: Shi'a fraction of the bourgeoisie

Shi'a fraction of in the industrial sector and members of the Association of Lebanese Industrialists (ALI) 2014, April

Company	Owners	Sector	Location	Role
Foam Mattresses Co. Fomaco SARL	Ussama Helbawi	Furniture	Office: Hadath Factory: Baalbek	President of the association of the industrialists of the southern suburbs of Beirut Ussama Helbawi (he is also the President of al-Ahed football club considered as Hezbollah's club and sponsored by al-Manar). Member of the board of the ALI.
Maximum Pour Le Commerce et L'Industrie	Hassan Yassine	Textile	Ghobeyri	Member of the board of the ALI
Kassem Mahfouz and Sons Co. "Mahfouz Stores"	Mr. Bassem Mahfouz	Textile	Office: Ghobeyri Factory: Chwaifat	Member of the board of the ALI
Plastic	Khalil Cherry	Chemical	Office: Beirut, Mar	Secretary

Chemical Company P.C.C. (S.A.R.L.)		Products	Elias Str. Factory: Ghazieh	General of the board of the ALI
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Other important Shi'a Industrialists

Company	Owners	Sector	Location	Role
Helbawi Bros. Co. SARL 1982	Mr. Mohammed Helbawi, Mr. Ali Helbawi, and Mr. Hussein Helbawi	Seeds and spices trading.	Burj Al-Barajneh	
Mussawi Trading Company Co SARL	Ali Al-Moussawi, Hossain Al-Moussawi, Bachir Al-Moussawi	Steel works, steel gates, Carrosserie	Baalbek	
Alfa InterFood Group is a Middle Eastern food company owned by the Group Harb Holding Int. S.A.L. Lebanon	Zein Harb	Produce Canned Food products, under the Brand name "Chtoura Gardens", in different factories in Lebanon.	Factory: Bekaa Office: Haret Hreik	Member of the Union of Lebanese Food Industries' Board. Harb Holding, through Zein Harb, is also member of the Chamber of Commerce,

				Industry, & Agriculture of Beirut
Linda Chocolate Factory	Ali Kobayssi	Food and chocolate	Address: Nabatieh	Member of the Union of Lebanese Food Industries
Dar Bilal For Printing and Publishing Co. SARL	Mr. Ahmad Hussein	Paper and Cardboard	Bir Hassan, Jnah	Ex-Secretary General of the board of the ALI (2013)
Syroliban International Co S.A.L. (Offshore)	Khalil Zantout, Chairman and CEO of Syroliban International Co S.A.L. (Offshore).	Sole distributor of Bridgestone and Firestone tires in Syria		<p>He is an elected board member of the International Chamber of Commerce in Lebanon.</p> <p>Khalil Zantout has been chosen by the ALI as one of the four prominent industrialists</p>

				who will establish the model of future industrial city. He is in charge of the industrial city in Nabatieh.
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Shi'a fraction of the Beirut Trade Association (BTA)

Company	Owners	Sector	Location	Role
Shar Metal Trading Co. S.A.R.L.	Fadi Ali Shahrour	Shar Metal Company (SMC), is the largest Ferrous and Non-Ferrous scrap metal exporters and processors throughout the Middle East region. They handle about 7000 mt/month of non-ferrous and 40000 mt/month of ferrous metals.	Factory: Beirut Office: Jnah, Beirut	Vice President of the BTA
Beydun Fire and Security S.A.R.L	Youssef Mohammad Beydoun	Beydoun Fire and Security is a leading provider of fire and security services.	Adress: Bir Hassan, Ghobeyri	Member of the BTA. Member of the Union of Security and Safety Professional

				in Lebanon
Sadco Sami Dandan and Co.	Jamal Sami Dandan	Pharmacy. SADCO is a privately owned company. SADCO was established in 1977 by entrepreneurs with experience in the field of pharmaceutical distribution since 1950.	Address: Bir Hassan, Ghobeyri	Member of the BTA.
	Rashid Hassan Kebbe			Member of the BTA and President of the Barbour Street Merchants Association

Shi'a fraction of the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, & Agriculture of Beirut (CCIAB)

Company	Owners	Role
Business Projects Company (BPC) is a Lebanese holding company, established in 1978 to develop and hold investments in privately held companies around the world.	Mr. Salah Osseiran, chairman and owner, initially managed BPC from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia before the company transferred headquarters to Beirut, Lebanon in 1995.	President of the Economic Committee of the CCIAB and member of the International Chamber of Commerce, Lebanon.
Abdallah Ali Matar & Sons SARL, a company that engages in real estate and	Mahmoud Matar is the Chairman and General Manager of Abdallah Ali	President of Members Committee of the CCIAB.

property development, as well as scrap metal trading in Lebanon and Africa.	Matar and Sons group.	
Harb Holding International S.A.L. is a holding company, which has subsidiaries that manufacture, pack, distribute all types of assorted foodstuff.	Mr. Zeina Harb, CEO	President of Exhibition Committee of the CCIAB
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jyl Food SAL (Off-shore) - Big Mills of the South – Al Dick 	Ahmad Hoteit, CEO of both companies and on the board of GS1 company as well.	<p>President of Labour and Social Affairs Committee of the CCIAB.</p> <p>On the board of directors of the Union of agrifood traders of Lebanon and member of the Union of Lebanese Food Industries</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Star Brands (Procter & Gamble Exclusive Agent in Algeria) - Lumière Group (High-end lighting fixture distributor in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, UAE, Jordan, Lebanon) - Hilight (Architectural lighting company) 	<p>Wissam Ariss, Founder, Chairman of the Board & CEO of Star Brands.</p> <p>He is also Co-Founder & Vice Chairman of the Board Lumière Group.</p> <p>He is Co-Founder of Hilight (Architectural lighting company).</p> <p>He is finally the Chairman of the Board Nestle Algeria, Partner Founder & Chairman of the Board Star Goods</p>	President of the Financial Committee of the CIIAB

Shi'a fraction of the banking sector and members of the Association of Banks in Lebanon (ABL) 2014, April

Jammal Trust Bank	Mr. Anwar Ali Jammal	<p>The Bank was established in 1963 under the name "Investment Bank" with an initial capital of L.L. 1million only. In 1966 Litex Bank took over and increased the capital to L.L. 3 million then ended its services on September 30th 1971.</p> <p>At this period, the entire share capital was purchased by a new group of shareholders who elected an entirely new Board of Directors under the Chairmanship of Mr. Ali Abdullah Jammal. The name was changed to Jammal Investment Bank S.A.L.</p>	Active member of the ABL
Lebanese Swiss	Tanal Sabah	The bank was	Member and

Bank		originally licensed in Lebanon on 1962. In 1973 it was taken over by Credit Suisse, Zurich, which controlled 99.01 percent of shares under the name of Credit Suisse (Moyen-Orient) S.A.L.. Those same shares were acquired in 1988 by a group of prominent businessmen and bankers headed by the current chairman Tanal Sabah to become Lebanese Swiss Bank SAL.	Treasurer of the ABL
Middle East Africa and Bank (MEAB) is owned by the Hejeij family. Hassan and Kassem Hejeij, the owners of the bank, originally left Lebanon and built a large	Hassan and Kassem Hejeij. The Hejeij Group Holding S.A.L also exists.	Brothers Hassan and Kassem Hejeij co-founded MEAB as a family-owned commercial bank in Lebanon in 1991. Today, of 73 active banks in Lebanon, MEAB is the fifteenth largest	Member of the ABL

<p>construction business in Africa. They extended their activities to other businesses, before establishing the bank in 1991.</p>		<p>bank by deposits.</p>	
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